

WALSALL CHRONICLE

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Services chiefs to focus on standards

CHILDREN'S services bosses have outlined their plans for improvement after it was recently revealed that only 57 per cent of secondary school pupils in Walsall attend good or outstanding schools.

The figure rose to 68 per cent for pupils attending primary schools but the borough still has one of the lowest rankings out of all West Midlands authorities, according to Ofsted. The report followed an Ofsted inspection of local authority support to schools in June this year in which the authority was rated as ineffective.

David Haley, executive director for children's services at Walsall Council, said decisive action was being taken to improve local schools in partnership with schools and academies to bring about improvement.

An improvement plan has been approved outlining actions to respond to the Ofsted inspection and an education challenge board was formed in August of this year following the change in administration.

Bosses at the authority said improvements were already evident in some schools, including Butts Primary School which has come out of special measures and is now rated good.

● Results – Page 5

Busy route is to close again

A BUSY cut-through into Walsall town centre will be shut for another four months from the start of January. North Street reopened to traffic for the busy Christmas period following a break in bridge works.

But when the project to raise the height of the rail bridge for the electrification of the line restarts on January 5, the road will be shut again until April. The works, part of the £30 million scheme to create faster local trains, first got under way in October.

MANOR FAILING ON REFERRALS

UNDER pressure Walsall Manor was faced with more than 630 referral appointments from GPs in a month – an increase of 15 per cent, figures show.

The hospital failed to meet the national 93 per cent target of making sure first outpatient appointments were made within two weeks in October.

It is the first time Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust slipped below 94 per cent this year and bosses saw 132 breaches in the month. Bosses have attributed this to capacity issues, patient choice and incorrect referrals. Those which were not processed as fast-tracked were resolved.

Of those not seen within 14 days, a total of 97 per cent were within 28 days, according to statistics to a meeting of the trust board which took place before the Christmas break.

Breaches

The report says: "This is the first time the trust has failed to achieve this target. A total number of 637 appointments were attended in October, this is a 15 per cent increase in activity compared with September.

"There were 132 breaches reported which is a significant increase when compared to the previous month.

Festive work boost to jobs

THERE has been a hefty drop in the jobless figure in Walsall thanks to pre-Christmas work in stores and at delivery firms. The number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in the town fell by 536 on the previous month's figure, down to 5,241, the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reveal. Across the wider West Midlands unemployment fell by 14,000 to 187,000 between August and October, according to the ONS.

Nationwide the figures provided the Government with some festive cheer but the cut of 63,000 in the jobless total to 1.96 million was the smallest quarterly fall for a year.

by Craig Hughes

pared to the average number of 25 per month so far this financial year."

Figures for November are still being finalised but it is anticipated they will be back towards 94 per cent.

It comes as it emerged recently that up to one in six patients waited more than four hours in A&E accident and emergency at the Manor as it fell short of government targets. The trust was fined more than £360,000 by Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group for failing to see 95 per cent of people within four hours from April to October.

But new figures released by NHS England have revealed the Trust dipped as low as 83.3 per cent during the space of one week last month and the highest weekly figure for November reached just 90.8 per cent.

Hark! The Caldmore angels sing



Chairman of Caldmore Traders Association Ali Mahmood and Linda Cooper, from St Michael & All Angels Church

CAROL singers in Walsall were treated to lunch after delighting shoppers and traders with festive hymns in Walsall. The popular Carols On The Green concert in Caldmore Green, has been taking place for the past 15 years but was threatened last Christmas through cuts in funding.

Local traders stepped in to ensure the multi-denominational celebration went ahead as planned and on Saturday they got together again to lay on food for the singers and lend their support. The carol service was organised

and attended by worshippers from St Michael's and All Angels and nearby churches. Afterwards they tucked into a feast of samosas, spring rolls, pakoras, kebabs and a specially designed cake, all provided by local businesses.

Linda Cooper, of St Michael's church, said the carols provided local Christmas shoppers with an uplifting seasonal soundtrack, while the choir greatly enjoyed the lunch provided at Caldmore Traders Association's headquarters. She said: "The carol singers and revellers were really grateful for

the refreshments, lunch and support supplied by the shopkeepers, especially in weather like Saturday's."

Caldmore Traders Association was set up in 2006 to promote Caldmore village and its surrounding areas as well as showcase members' products and services. Eighty per cent of traders in Caldmore live within three miles.

Association chairman Ali Mahmood said: "We're always pleased to help local people celebrate all the big festivals. We've supported Eid, Diwali, Vaisakhi and now Christmas."

Builder's shooting fuels war of words

A WAR of words has broken out over the shooting of a Black Country builder by an American police officer he had stabbed several times as he was investigated over links to a runaway teenager.

Readers of a local newspaper in Wisconsin have divided opinion over Sharrinder Singh Garcha, who an inquest heard was lawfully killed by US policeman William Gray – with some even calling him a terrorist.

The 20-year-old from Bull Street, Darlaston, had stabbed the policeman in the neck, face and hand as they were sitting in a car while looking for a missing 17-year-old girl Garcha was said to have gone to the States to meet.

On the website of the Chippewa Herald newspaper, which covers the county where the incident took place in November, readers accused Sikh Garcha of being an Islamic terrorist while others leapt to his defence and said there were 'two sides' to the story and that Garcha 'would not hurt a fly'.

Someone calling himself Tim1 wrote 'RIP Sharrinder Garcha'.

But 'youknowme' replied: "I don't think a terrorist should rest in peace Tim1. You try to cut the head of an American, you die."

● Lawfully – Page 2

Pound treats shop to open

A DISCOUNT bakery is to open in Walsall town centre creating around 10 jobs, it has been announced.

Poundbakery, which opened in Wolverhampton last week, plans to open its fourth shop in the Black Country in the New Year.

Details of the shop's location are yet to be revealed.

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Councillors hit out at bus fare rises

BUS fare increases across the Black Country have been condemned by councillors.

National Express West Midlands announced last week that fares are set to increase by five per cent on January 2. For example, adult single tickets will rise from £2.10 to £2.20.

But Wolverhampton councillor Ian Claymore, who is also a mem-

ber of transport body Centro, said the hike would be too costly for passengers.

"My own view is that this is a further cost to people, certainly in the Black Country area, because if we look at the GMP in the Black Country it is on par with Portugal, one of the poorest countries in Europe.

"This will have a detrimental effect on the fare paying customers

who use the National Express service."

The bus company has said the new fares will support record investment into the region's bus network in 2015, including £34 million on new buses.

Councillor Claymore added: "I think you will find with the financial return that National Express present, they more than met their

particular targets and I am sorry to see that they haven't taken that into consideration."

He said if buses were a person's only form of transport, they would have to struggle to come up with the extra cash.

He concluded that the increase could also have a detrimental effect if people turn to their own transport instead.

Builder lawfully killed after attack on officer

A BUILDER from the Black Country was shot dead by a policeman in America after he stabbed the officer in the face.

Former pupil at Wood Green School in Wednesbury, Sharrinder Singh Garcha, aged 20, died in the Wisconsin shooting after turning on a deputy searching for a girl he had runaway with. An inquest last Tuesday, in Smethwick concluded the cause of death was lawful killing.

A coroner heard how Garcha had tried to cut the throat of a deputy sheriff with a knife.

But his family, from Walsall, insisted he was a 'gentle giant'. Garcha, who lived with his parents in Bull Street, Darlaston, travelled to America in October.

He flew into Tampa International Airport in Florida on October 10 but was immediately refused entry because police believed he was there to meet a young girl under the age of 18.

His passport was confiscated and he was told he would be deported the next day. Garcha, however, failed to collect the passport and it is believed he met up with the 17-year-old girl.

Deported

They then left Florida and ran away to Wisconsin. Once there, Garcha came into contact with the police again and said he had information about the runaway girl. Officers realised he was supposed to be deported and that is what is believed to have provoked the stabbing and shooting on November 14.

He had been considered a 'person of interest' by the Department of Homeland Security, according to the Chippewa County Sheriff's Office. During an interview Garcha told sheriff's investigator William Gray that he knew where the runaway was.

Gray then drove Garcha to several locations, includ-

ing a car park where Gray waited for assistance before checking a residence. As the two waited in Gray's unmarked squad car, Garcha attacked Gray with a knife, stabbing him several times in the face and neck before being shot in the head by the deputy, killing him instantly.

Deputy Sheriff Gray was taken to hospital, suffering severe cuts to his face, neck and hands but he has since recovered.

Senior coroner Zafar Siddique concluded it had been a lawful killing in what appeared to be self-defence. Family at Garcha's home in Bull Street said he had been looking for building work in America.

Garcha was described as a 'gentle giant' but relatives declined to comment further. A Facebook page, called RIP Sharrinder Garcha, has been set up in his memory.

Eyewitnesses to the incident told how Gray emerged from the car bloody and clutching his neck, bent over and went to the road to wave down a car.

Two lorries stopped and Gray fell to his knees.

Chippewa County Sheriff Jim Kowalczyk said the officer is now recovering. He said: "He's doing well, and I wish him the best.

"He's a very, very good officer and hopefully it's just a matter of time before he's back."



William Gray, stabbed in the face by Garcha



Sharrinder Garcha, shot dead by a policeman

Soaring sales of balloonist tales

THE autobiography of an entrepreneur and aviation adventurer has reached the top of the online book sales.

Mike Kendrick, who lives in Bridgnorth, has seen his book, Thursday's Child - The Mike Kendrick Story, climb into the top one per cent of sales through global internet company, Amazon.

The book, co-written by author Simon Golding, has received critical acclaim on the UK and US Amazon book sites.

Sir Richard Branson, who wrote the book's foreword, has encouraged his friend

and former balloon adventurer, Mr Kendrick, to write a second book, which will be called The Branson Years.

Mr Kendrick, 68, said he believed the book, which covers his escapades in Bridgnorth, Birmingham and the Black Country, had performed so well because of the "honesty, hilarity and tales of adventure".

Thursday's Child is available via Amazon.co.uk and Waterstones. Fifty signed first edition copies have also been made available for the Christmas period.

Rider is killed in accident near pub

A MOTORCYCLIST has died after a crash on a busy road on the border of Walsall and Birmingham.

The man, believed to be from Staffordshire, was pronounced dead at the scene opposite the Deers Leap pub in Queslett Road between Pheasey and Queslett.

West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman Murray MacGregor said: "On arrival crews found a motorcyclist who had suffered very significant injuries. He was taken on to the ambulance so that staff could work on him, but unfortunately, his condition deteriorated and he was confirmed dead at the scene."

Emergency crews were called to the scene, near the junction with Doe Bank Lane, at 8.10pm last Monday. Stunned residents spoke of their shock.

Doe Bank Lane businessman Martin Bland, 57, said: "I was in the living room when I noticed flashing blue lights out on the dual carriageway. There were about police cars and a van.

"A relative of the dead man knocked on my door to ask if I knew what happened. He was very distressed and said the rider was from Staffordshire."

Race sponsor platform bid

BOSESSES at a Darlaston flooring factory are celebrating after scooping a new deal worth tens of thousands of pounds to build a platform for a Formula One event.

Regent Engineering Ltd based in Salisbury Street this year won a £70,000 contract to create a Floor-stak platform for a sponsor at the race in Abu Dhabi. It was built for a private function at an hotel at Saadiyat Island and was the factory's first foray in the region.

The client was so impressed that a repeat order has been placed for next year's Grand Prix.

Rail services hit

RAIL passengers are being reminded to check before they travel. Reduced timetables are in use on various routes on Christmas Eve with the frequency of trains winding down from 1pm, London Midland said. There will be no trains on Christmas Day or Boxing Day.

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FIRM CARE MOBILITY

Town gets its first One Stop near HQ

ONE Stop is to see the opening of its first franchise in its home town.

The former Londis store in Chester Road, Brownhills, owned by Kay and Tom Bains is being refitted as a One Stop in January.

One Stop, a subsidiary of Tesco which acquired the chain in 2003, began its new franchise concept for independent retailers last year. It has now signed up 75 franchise stores.

The Chester Road store will be the closest to One Stop's headquarters.

Mr and Mrs Bains have operated the site since 1990, including the last 15 years as a Londis store.

The move to One Stop will see the store also get a minor extension, to provide more space for promotions. The new look store will still provide its popular range of existing services which include an ATM, PayPoint, Lottery, home news delivery, Collect Plus parcel service and a pick and drop dry cleaning facility.

Andrew King, One Stop franchise director, said: "We're delighted to have passed the 75 store mark since our launch at the end of January this year and it'll be great to have a franchise store right on our doorstep."

Council chief to give £100

A COUNCIL leader has swapped cards for cash to support charities this Christmas.

Walsall chief councillor Sean Coughlan has donated £100 to the Mayor's charities rather than sending out Christmas cards.

He said: "I feel the money I spend would be put to better use by these causes."

The mayor's charities are The MacMillan Cancer Support Group in Walsall and Black Country branch of the MS Society, plus Walsall-based Heart Care and the Bloxwich Community Partnership charity.

Link road meet

HIGHWAYS bosses are to hold a meeting in Essington over a proposed link road between the M54, M6 and M6 Toll. Residents called for a consultation with motorway chiefs. It will be held on January 9 and January 10 at Essington Community Centre.

Social care charges views sought by council

RESIDENTS in Walsall who live in their own homes and pay for social care services will have their say on the charges at a series of consultation events which are taking place next month.

Some people pay for home care, an emergency intercom system, day centre visits, and supported living and extra care housing scheme costs.

Recent changes in national legislation under the Care Act and the Children and Families Act councils need to review the existing charging arrangements.

Under the new criteria more people will have access to the council's support.

A new charging for guidance has also been issued to town halls and a review is now required.

Walsall Council's cabinet member for social care Councillor Diane Coughlan said: "We want people to have their say and want them to stimulate discussions and suggestions."

A series of public meetings will be held, all from 6-8pm, starting on January 5 at Willenhall Chart Centre, Gomer Street, Willenhall; January 7 at Bentley Community Centre, Wilkes Avenue, Bentley; January 13 at Manor Farm Community Centre, King George Crescent, Rushall.

Sessions

The events then continue on January 14 at The Crossing at St Paul's Darwall Street, Walsall; January 19 at Collingwood Centre, Collingwood Drive, Great Barr; January

22 at Palfrey Community Centre, Milton Street, Palfrey; January 26 at Stan Ball Centre, Abbots Drive, Bloxwich; and January 28 at The Crossing at St Paul's.

Drop-in sessions to provide an opportunity for individual discussions with council officers will also be held from 2-4pm starting on January 9 at Bentley Community Centre, Wilkes Avenue, Bentley, and then January 13 at Willenhall Chart Centre, Gomer Street, Willenhall; January 15 at Manor Farm Community Centre, King George Crescent, Rushall.

Also on January 20 at Mattesley Court, Cresswell Crescent, Bloxwich, 10am to midday; and Furlong House, Lanton Close, Bloxwich, 6pm to 8pm.

Other events include January 21 at

Knives Court, High Street, Brownhills, 11am to 1pm; January 27 Deighton Court, Brockhurst Crescent, Delves, 3pm to 5pm; January 30 at Alrewych Court, Northgate, Aldridge, 2-4pm.

They continue on February 2 at Winehala Court, Sandbeds Road, Short Heath, 2-4pm; February 3 at St Peter's Court, Harrison Street, Bloxwich, 2-4pm; February 4 at Old Vicarage Court, Old Vicarage Close, Pelsall, 6pm to 8pm; February 5 at Jenner House, Jenner Road, Beechdale, 10am to midday and Oakwood Lodge, Chaucer Avenue, Short Heath, 6pm to 8pm; February 6 at Moxley Court, Sutton Road, Moxley, 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

A survey and consultation document will also be available soon.

Midlands' first digital Argos lined up for Crown Wharf

ARGOS will open its first digital store in the Midlands at Walsall's Crown Wharf, under new plans.

The retail giant is to move into a new unit in February, following the closure of its current site at the Saddlers Shopping Centre. Tablets will replace traditional catalogues and paper forms at the planned store in Wolverhampton Street.

Staff working at the existing outlet will be offered the chance to transfer to the retail park site, which is opposite the Walsall Waterfront which itself is undergoing millions of pounds worth of investment.

Argos, which was founded in the early 1970s, has more than 730 stores and 340 million website visits a year.

A statement from the firm said: "Argos can confirm that it is opening its first digital store in the West Midlands at Crown Wharf Shopping Park, Walsall in February 2015, following the closure of our current store in the Saddlers Shopping Centre."

"Colleagues at our store in the Saddlers Shopping Centre have been informed, and will have the option to transfer across to our new store. The digital store will have a fresh and contemporary look, where tables of tablets will replace Argos' traditional laminated catalogues, paper slips and pencils."

"This means that shoppers will be able to take advantage of the speed and convenience of online shopping in their local store."

Argos had been earmarked to open on the Bescot Retail Park near Walsall Football Club, along with Aldi several years ago.

But a planning inspector

by Craig Hughes

was forced to rule on the proposals in 2010.

This was after the council put forward concerns they would have a negative impact on the town centre – seeing as the borough was already well-served by such stores. Despite getting the go-ahead from the government inspector the stores have failed to open at the park.

The new-look Argos comes as work on a £12 million cinema and leisure development at the Waterfront is now under way.

An eight-screen Light cinema and four restaurants – a Chiquito, Pizza Express, Bella Italia and Hungry Horse – form part of the scheme which is due to be finished by next winter.

More than 200 jobs are to be created and further retail space will be made available during the second phase of the development.

It also emerged earlier this week that Poundland is the second big brand to sign up for the multi-million pound St Matthews Quarter in the town centre. The Willenhall-based firm will join homeware store B&M who have also struck a deal to form part of the 11 units in Digbeth.

John tackles a weighty problem



John Elwell from Willenhall, the author of *Simply Slim: the Made to Measure Guide to Weight Loss*

A FITNESS enthusiast from the Black Country has written a no-nonsense slimming guide.

John Elwell, aged 58 from Willenhall, is a nutritional adviser – as well as black belt in karate – and used his personal experiences to write *Simply Slim: the Made to Measure Guide to Weight Loss*. Staying true to his no-nonsense roots, Mr Elwell said he was inspired to research the book after noticing the number of obese people

as he drove his van around for his fire protection business. He believes that the Harris Benedict Equation, on which most diet-books base their calorie-intake recommendations, is no longer relevant to modern society where people live far less-active lives.

"When that equation was worked out in 1919, people were much more active than they are now," said Mr Elwell. "I'm worried that the normal NHS recommendations of 2,000 calories

for women and 2,500 for men are wrong for people today." Mr Elwell has chosen a simple, straightforward style for his book without detailed calorie counters or recipe ideas.

Having begun by using himself as a guinea pig, Mr Elwell now claims to have helped a range of people to lose weight, some of whom are used as case studies in the book. Anyone who is interested can find the book on Amazon or contact him on 07769715648.

Roadworks are finally finished

RESIDENTS in a Walsall community have welcomed long-awaited roadworks that has been completed.

Potholes have been filled in, yellow and white lines have been repainted plus carriageways resurfaced in main routes in the Birchills area of the town.

Work has been done in Old Birchills and Birchills Street while work was carried out in Hospital Street previously.

Birchills-Leamore councillor and chairman of the area's Agenda 21 group Chris Jones said: "Since the ring road development was done several years ago Birchills has seen traffic greatly increase."

Book challenge for Christmas

CHILDREN are being offered a Christmas reading challenge with libraries in Walsall.

The aim of the challenge is to borrow and read three books from the library by January 6. Once all three books have been read, children can log which stories they've enjoyed online.

Anne Wise, children's and young people's co-ordinator, said: "At this time of year children tend to spend a lot of time indoors so reading is a great activity. Visit www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk for more details."

Redevelopment call on precinct

A SIX-MONTH deadline for owners of a rundown Brownhills shopping centre to produce firm redevelopment plans or face enforcement action was due to get council backing.

Members of the cabinet were due to agree that an application for Ravenscourt be submitted by the summer or a formal order issued to clean up the site.

More than 500 people signed a petition calling for the local authority to compulsory purchase the site.

CCTV focusing on yob problems

ANTI-SOCIAL behaviour is being monitored in parts of Walsall amid complaints.

The council is taking action to assess on-going nuisance using CCTV to monitor issues in the Walsall South area and working with neighbourhood and community groups.

A report from area manager Denise Perry said Walsall Arboretum by the skate park and Camden Street, Palfrey, had been subject to concerns.

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



OWING to a door being accidentally left open I spent the night sharing a bed with the cat and was reminded of a crucial difference between dogs and cats. A dog will never sit on your head.

BAH, humbug and off to the big store. It is the duty of every male at this time of year to be dragged up and down tinsel-decked aisles while looking at pointless objects. Consider the following: A window vacuum. A gluten-free sausage-making kit. A small book entitled A Guinea Pig Nativity. You can measure the state of society's development by counting the number of objects we can manage perfectly well without.

THE Daily Telegraph leader column, no less, assures us this week that Kate and William's little boy "will be George VII one fine day." Not if his grandfather beats him to it, he won't. There is still speculation that Prince Charles, on taking the throne, will style himself King George VII. Let us hope we have to wait a very long time to find out.

IS there anything sillier than the claim by Ukip leader Nigel Farage that he was late for a party in Wales as a result of immigration causing traffic jams? Yes, there is. It is the monstrous, head-in-the-sand delusion among so many politicians that the population of the UK can rise from 50 million to 70 million in a single lifetime and cause no problems at all. Voters are tempted by Farage only because they are governed by ostriches.

LIFE imitates art but politics imitates adverts. In the Twix TV commercial, the makers of the chocolate twin-bar have a row and set up separate factories, one producing the left bar, the other the right. Both are convinced their products are totally different but everyone can see they are identical. And so to the interview with shadow chancellor Ed Balls on Today (Radio 4) when Sarah Montague tried, and failed, to establish which government department budgets would be cut by a future Labour government, and by how much. Balls' message is that Labour's cuts will be fair but tough. George Osborne's message is that Tory cuts will be tough but fair. Left bar? Right bar? It's a puzzle, innit? Meanwhile, Sarah Montague's brave but futile attempt to shine a light into Labour's true intentions should be recorded and shown to schoolchildren everywhere as an example of that useful phrase: "Like lying to nail blanchange to the ceiling."



I GET a regular stream of mail from a small but noisy group of old codgers complaining about how hard-up pensioners are these days. The suggestion is that there was once a golden age when pensioners had enough money. Remind me. When was that?

THERE is a theory that people are drawn to careers which reflect their name, which is why Mr Salmon works for the water company and Miss Frost is a weather forecaster. A reader reports a fine concreting job completed by Norman the Concretor and Jim'll Mix It.

A READER overheard this conversation between a stallholder and an English customer trying to get into the spirit of the Frankfurt Christmas Market in Birmingham by ordering a sausage and mustard in the lingo. Brit: "Eine Bratwurst mit Senf, bitte ." Stallholder: "No point talking like that, mate. I'm from Sedgley."

BENEFITS Street (C4) returns next year, this time examining the lager-fuelled underclass in Stockton-on-Tees. In response, a local campaign has been launched to promote the town's image. It is called The Positively Stockton-on-Tees campaign, to be known as Psst for short. Seriously.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

£100k chief is sought for authority

WALSALL Council is looking to appoint a new £100,000-a-year director – despite more than 400 jobs facing the axe under cuts.

The cash-strapped authority is advertising for a director of public health who will be a "visionary and motivational leader."

It comes despite the need to make £86m of savings during the next four years, including £29m within the next year. There are 487 posts

at risks over two years and libraries also face closure as part of the vast range of cuts.

But council chiefs have insisted it is a legal requirement to fill the post and the salary of up to £102,000 is in line with people in other areas in the role. The most recent person to fulfil the position has been Dr Isabel Gillis. She was initially employed on an interim basis with NHS Walsall from October 2011. Then public

health responsibilities transferred from the NHS to local government in April 2013.

Councillor Ian Robertson, portfolio holder for health at Walsall Council, said: "It is a legal requirement for all local authorities to employ a director of public health. This post carries a weighty responsibility, not just for the health protection of all our residents, but promotes health improvement and

includes the tackling of health inequalities in Walsall.

"The salary offered to the postholder is in line with similar appointments in other authorities."

The director of public health job is being advertised with applications to be submitted by January 10. It states: "Walsall is a borough of striking contrasts and diversity – and this presents challenges but also exciting potential."

College poised to go for charitable status

A COLLEGE in Walsall is poised to break free from the council in a bid to secure its long-term future.

Walsall Adult and Community College, which caters for around 5,000 students a year, is set to operate independently. The move will enable the college to apply for further pots of funding amid Government cuts and will save costs for cash-strapped Walsall Council.

Almost 150 staff will transfer over under the plans, which were agreed by the decision-making cabinet before the Christmas break.

The college, known as WACC, has two sites in Hawbush Road, Leamore, and Whitehall Centre, Caldmore, and will continue to receive a reduced level of council support for the next two years.

Review

It will apply for charitable status and to become a wholly-owned subsidiary of the council, initially receiving rent-free accommodation and business support, before becoming fully independent in the third year.

The idea to go independent, which is being referred to as 'spinning out', follows an independent review commissioned by the authority. The college was rated as outstanding by Ofsted last year.

Jamie Morris, executive director of neighbourhood services, said: "By operating independently of the council,

by Craig Hughes

Walsall Adult and Community College would be able to sustain and enhance the services it provides by attracting funding from other sources.

"This would enable the college to become financially sustainable at a time when its main source of public funding from the Skills Funding Agency is under pressure and nationally decreasing.

He added: "The key advantage for the council of the college spinning out is that the spin out will reduce the risk to the council from the ongoing reduction in the level of core funding provided to the college."

The report states that if WACC says within council control, the local authority will have to continue to invest resources in the college at a time when cuts mean it is having to focus on its core services. The college had an operational deficit of £123,000 in 2012/13 and £226,000 last year.

The Range rings changes

A HOME furnishing chain which opened this year in Willenhall has applied to the council for part-retrospective planning permission to build a garden centre. The Range in Willenhall was opened in the former Hooty's store by interior designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen in April.

The company wants to erect a garden centre with a pitched roof, 10ft palisade fence and open-sided canopy in the service yard of the site in Longcres Industrial Estate.

A report to Walsall Council shows the garden centre with 7ft-high hedges fencing is already in use. Officers are recommending approval of the change of use.

99p store in donation of gifts



Managers, front Gareth Brookes and Debbie Harper, with staff, from left, Chanice Kennedy, Katrina Glenn and Chadwin Brodie as they appeal for customers to

MORE than 100 presents are on their way to poorly children at Walsall Manor Hospital this Christmas.

Shoppers at 99p Stores in New Road, Willenhall have been donating gifts they buy in store. In total, 108 presents have been collected by staff at the shop and they delivered them to the Manor Hospital's children's ward on Saturday.

Store manager Gareth Brookes said: "We have the belief that every child deserves a present at Christmas so we decided to col-

lect presents in store for them. We wanted to give something back to the community.

"Our customers have been very generous. We've managed to collect 108 presents so far. We started collecting at the end of November." Among the 99p presents collected so far include dolls, action figures, jigsaws and colouring books.

Mr Brookes added: "It's the first time we've ever done anything like this but we've been overwhelmed by the generosity of our customers."

Shaylor to increase its staff in scheme

A LEADING construction firm could expand its offices to meet growing demand, under plans poised to create more jobs.

Shaylor Construction has lodged plans with Walsall Council for its head office site at Anchor Brook Industrial Park, in Aldridge. The proposals state that the construction business has become more successful and is increasing the number of development projects, which has in turn increased the staffing requirement.

Further office space is needed, together with a training and conference room. The plans, which claim the company is reverting back to pre-recession levels of business, include installing a mezzanine floor to provide additional office space.

The area directly below the proposed mezzanine, on ground floor level, will also provide office space.

The plans would also include providing five additional car parking spaces, increasing the number from 35 to 40 spaces, while bike shelters will also be provided.

The family-owned Shaylor group was formed in 1969 and has a £60m annual turnover. It also has a Birmingham office.

Driver's joy as work ends

RESIDENTS in Birchills have welcomed the eventual completion of ongoing roadworks.

Potholes have been filled in, yellow and white lines have been repainted, plus carriageways resurfaced in main routes in Old Birchills and Birchills Street while work was carried out in Hospital Street previously.

Birchills-Leamore Councillor Chris Jones said: "Since the ring road development was done several years ago Birchills has seen traffic greatly increase and the standard of its roads decrease."

Coaches boost

TRAIN disruptions planned for over Christmas have led to a flurry of coach bookings, National Express has said. The firm said its advance booking figures for services to and from Birmingham between December 1 and January 4, were up four per cent on last year.

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Funding offer to help with insulation

HOMEOWNERS in Walsall can now apply for funding that could significantly improve the energy efficiency of their homes and help reduce their bills, thanks to a new Government scheme.

The Green Deal Home Improvement Fund (GDHIF) will be available to people who could benefit from making energy-saving home improvements, including solid wall insulation from British Gas. Homes that were built before 1930 often feature a solid wall design, which are hard to heat and are among the least energy efficient properties in the UK.

Now, owners of solid wall properties can use up to £4,000 of the funds available to invest in external wall insulation from British Gas, which can help homeowners to make energy efficiency savings of up to £460 per year on a detached home and £270 on semi-detached, as well as improving the look of the property.

Debra Goodwin from British Gas, said: "We're committed to helping people improve their energy efficiency." More information on how to apply for the voucher can be found at www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures.

British Gas can be contacted on 0800 980 7640

Friends hit out at cuts

AN ENVIRONMENTAL group has raised concerns about the impact on recycling and street cleaning under council cuts. Walsall Friends of the Earth has written to the authority amid fears over the impact of cost-cutting measures such as reducing tip hours.

They say these could lead to more flytipping which will cost the Council to clean up.

They also warn that if garden waste is dumped and streets aren't clean Walsall will become a less attractive to live and work, undermining much needed regeneration.

Nikki in concert

NICKI Minaj will perform at Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena next year. She will bring The Pinkprint Tour to the venue on April 3. The tour also features R&B superstar Trey Songz. Tickets are on sale now available from www.thethekickfactory.com or 0844 338 8000.

Dignitaries cut it fine for £24m leisure bid



Councillor Khizar Hussain, centre, with leisure chief Chris Holaday and Wayne Flannery

CHIEFS took part in a sod-cutting ceremony to mark the start of a £24.3 million project to build two state-of-the-art leisure centres in Bloxwich and Walsall Wood.

Walsall Council is working in partnership with developer ISG on the programme aimed to provide modern sites to encourage more people to keep fit.

Cabinet member for leisure and culture Councillor Khizar Hussain took part in the traditional ceremony of cutting the first piece of turf to mark the imminent start of work at the site in High Street, Bloxwich.

Work will also be carried out to replace Oak Park Leisure Centre, in Walsall Wood. "These

two new Active Living Centres represent a massive investment in leisure in Walsall aimed at encouraging more people to exercise and help us meet our goal of 'more people, more active, more often'.

"Today's ceremony means we are on the verge of work getting underway and by this time next year both new leisure centres will really be starting to take shape," Councillor Hussain said. The ceremony was held ahead of the closure of the existing Bloxwich Leisure Centre at the same site.

The existing Oak Park Leisure Centre will not need to close and will remain open while the new complex is being built. Users from

Bloxwich can use Oak Park, Walsall Gala Baths and Darlaston Swimming Pool in the interim.

When completed in 2016 the new facilities at Bloxwich will include a 25-metre six lane pool, teaching pool, a sports hall, 100 station fitness suite, dance studio and cafe.

Oak Park will get a 25-metre eight lane pool, a six court sports hall, dance studio, two squash courts, cafe, artificial turf pitch and extra car parking spaces.

ISG's project director Wayne Flannery said: "Walsall Council's decision to upgrade facilities at the Bloxwich and Oak Park sites will have a major impact on boosting the community's participation in sporting and leisure activities."

Borough primary schools among worst for results

PRIMARY schools in Walsall remain some of the worst in the country in terms of pupil achievement, new figures have revealed.

The borough has slid further down the rankings in the past year and now sits 147th of 152 local authorities in terms of pupils achieving the benchmark of level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths. The figures relate to Key Stage 2 national curriculum results.

Association on look out for tutors

AN EDUCATION and training group is looking for tutors in the Black Country to help teach on a range of courses.

The Wolverhampton and Black Country branch of the Workers Educational Association is looking for qualified tutors and volunteers. It specialises in adult education organisation courses including English language courses, yoga, sewing and numeracy.

All courses are designed around themes including culture, health and well-being, community engagement and employability.

Spokeswoman Tracey Beasley said: "Our courses are designed to meet the learning needs of local people whether it may be to help them improve their health and well-being, find employment or simply learn about what is going on in their local community."

The association already has more than 400 branches, 3,000 volunteers and 2,000 part-time tutors across the country. Visit www.wea.org.uk or call 0121 237 8120 for details.

Celebrate

Walsall Council leader Sean Coughlan, said: "We are at a crucial point in our journey to improve Walsall's schools and it is important that we celebrate these achievements and look to build on these strengths."

St Anne's Catholic Primary School in Streety also had a successful year. A total of 96 per cent of pupils at last year's top performing school got level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths. The school's average points score was 31.4.

Manor Primary School in Streety came third and Park Hall Junior Academy was fourth. Leamore Primary School came bottom of the pile, with only 23 per cent of 30 eligible pupils achieving the benchmark.

Post haste for show of new box support



Councillor Chris Bott, with the new post box in Moxley, and fellow campaigners, from left, Laurence Steatham, Ann Bond, postmistress Min Dhadli, Stan Mincher, Sue Steatham, Councillor Paul Bott and Carol Mincher

DELIGHTED campaigners were among the first in the queue to use a long-awaited pillar box that has been delivered to Moxley Post Office.

The postal service moved to the premises in Kendrick Road earlier this year as part of a major modernisation programme across the network, but there was no post box outside for customers to use.

Residents in Moxley set up a campaign to get a box installed for those who may need to post letters out of hours. Darlaston South representa-

tive Councillor Chris Bott said she is pleased that the box has finally arrived. "It has taken several months working with Royal Mail, residents, and Min who runs the post office.

"Myself and Councillor Paul Bott are pleased that we have got two post boxes in Moxley so both parts of the area are covered after Royal Mail decided to retain the post box in Burns Road," she said. The relocation of the post office aimed to make it easier for customers, with longer opening hours and a modern open plan floor design.

The move allowed the post office to extend its opening hours.

The Government has promised to spend £1.34 billion on the post office network to ensure there is no programme of post office closures and to update branches. And 12 months ago it announced that a further £640m would be invested from 2015 to 2018.

When completed the national investment programme will see up to 8,000 branches modernised with additional investment in more than 3,000 community and outreach branches.

Tuition centre is looking to grow

AN education and tuition centre in Walsall is looking to expand the number of pupils it caters for.

The site in Walsstead Road, Palfrey, has permission to take 40 students but plans have been lodged with Walsall Council to increase this to 50.

The ground floor of the building has four classrooms.

A report, lodged with the plans, reads: "Most activity would be during the evenings for a two-hour period during weekdays and will be low key. It will not be harmful to the residential character of this area."

Petrol plans to create eight jobs

A PETROL filling station and shop in Willenhall will be demolished and a larger one built, under plans set to bring eight jobs.

Euro Garages Limited has lodged plans with Walsall Council to transform the site in Wolverhampton Road West. The company recently bought the site from Esso and wants to modernise it.

A report states: "The existing outdated shop will be demolished as will the canopy, forecourt, jet washes and out building."

Shaylor director in award success

THE framework director of Aldridge-based Shaylor Group was named achiever of the year in the Celebrating Construction 2014 national awards.

Martin Chambers had won the West Midlands regional award which was announced in April.

Manchester-born Mr Chambers is an Aston University graduate and has worked in the West Midlands since then.

Winnick praises pupils during visit

AN MP has praised youngsters for putting him through his paces after being quizzed about his role during a school visit.

Walsall North MP David Winnick visited Beacon Primary in Davis Road, New Invention. He said: "The youngsters were well prepared with questions for me and I was certainly put through my paces."

Pub extension bid

A PUB in Willenhall town centre has put forward fresh expansion plans. The Royal George in New Road wants to create a two-storey rear extension and has sent revised proposals to Walsall Council.

ADVERTISEMENT

Cloudy2Clear Windows – Service With A Smile!

It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

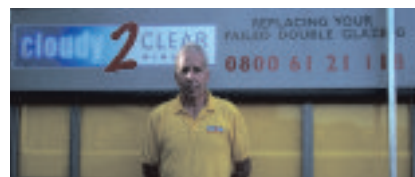
Managing Director Brian Stanley feels that it's all about service. "Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 5 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people

money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done.

We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole."

Cloudy2Clear service Wolverhampton and the surrounding

area and Brian is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. "The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people



I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated."

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Brian a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews

ONE thing that maybe should have been on your Christmas list – a pillowcase using technology borrowed from Nasa?

Now maybe you were under the misconception that pillow cases were pretty much one and the same. Ok, some might be polyester, some cotton – maybe silk if you're from Tettenhall – but by and large, there isn't that much technology that goes into them.

Well, our good friends in the old US of A are really pushing the envelope (I think that's what they say across the pond) with their latest development in pillowcase technology.

Completely demolishing the myth that space exploration is an expensive luxury, somebody has used the findings of extra-terrestrial research to come up with a range of pillowcases that look and smell like bacon. Why did nobody come up with this sooner?

"Our bacon-scented pillow-cases use state-of-the-art printing technology we stole from Nasa to allow the scent of bacon to permeate your dreams and expand your mind," says the press release.

"That's right, the scent of bacon is embedded in the ink on these specially printed pillow-cases," adds the wonderfully understated missive.

If cared for according to the included instructions, the smell will last for six-to-12 months, and can endure multiple wash cycles.

Not only that, sleeping on a machine-washable bacon buttie can also enrich the mind, giving us better dreams and a dramatic rise in intelligence levels according to some of the more bizarre claims.

It also promises easier morning wake-ups and effortless weight loss.

Unless, of course, you eat your pillowcase.

□□□□□

MEMO to local authorities, and other taxpayer-funded bodies. Replacing words with numerals, such as Pathway 2 Change or Plan 4 Life does not make you look trendy, relevant or cool.

It does make you look semi-literate and stupid, though. And is it any wonder that some youngsters leave school barely able to construct a sentence in basic English when the authorities which are supposed to be educating them appear unable to tell the difference between numbers and letters?

□□□□□

MEANWHILE, the British Army will send hundreds of troops over to Iraq in the New Year, to 'pass on the lessons learned in Afghanistan'.

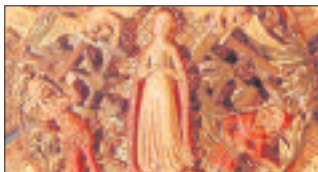
Lessons learned in Afghanistan? The words 'horse', 'bolted' and 'stable door' spring to mind. Perhaps if a previous prime minister had learned the lessons from the past, we would never have sent any troops to Afghanistan in the first place.



MP Gavin Williamson's choice



West Bromwich West MP Adrian Bailey's card



Walsall South MP Valerie Vaz's card



Wolverhampton's Emma Reynolds's choice



The party leaders' choice of cards for this year



Walsall MP David Winnick's choice

House of cards for political Christmas

Differing politician festive card designs show a wide variety of styles as we head towards election year

FROM the Houses of Parliament in the snow to the drawings of schoolchildren, MPs always try to find their own way of saying Merry Christmas.

While party leaders such as David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg put themselves on the front of their cards, backbenchers and shadow ministers like to reflect the people they represent.

Some go as far as to organise competitions months in advance among youngsters as they seek the right design.

West Bromwich West MP Adrian Bailey was so keen to get started he launched his competition in June, while temperatures were in the low 20s.

But the Labour MP wanted to give every primary school in his constituency the opportunity to get involved.

Nine eventually took him up on the offer and had their youngsters submit their designs.

The winning entry was by 10-year-old Mohammed Rezwan Shuvo of Sacred Heart Primary School in Tipton, who painted his school in the snow.

His picture will now feature on the front of Mr Bailey's constituency Christmas cards of which more than 1,000 are being sent to constituents, businesses, places of worship and schools.

Mr Bailey said: "Mohammed's entry was fantastic as were all the entries and it was very difficult to choose a winner."

All the pictures are being displayed in Tipton Library where the majority of the schools took part in the competition.

Another MP who chose a youngster to create his card's image was South Staffordshire's Gavin Williamson.

As Parliamentary Private Secretary to



The card chosen by Halesowen and Rowley Regis MP James Morris

the Prime Minister, he will be sure to send a card to David Cameron.

That means Caitlin Oakley, who is in year nine at Wombourne's Ounsdale Primary School, will have her picture of a snowman and snow woman in front of the village maypole on display in 10 Downing Street.

Wolverhampton North East's Emma Reynolds chose from 100 entries from primary schools.

The winner was Melissa Malahleha, aged 10, a pupil at St Paul's Primary School in Pendeford.

Miss Reynolds, shadow housing minister, said: "I send over 500 cards every year, so I was excited to give one of my talented young constituents an opportunity to design it."

James Morris, MP for Halesowen and Rowley Regis, and Margot James, who represents Stourbridge also got young people to design their cards. Miss James worked with Stourbridge College Art and Design Centre in Brierley Hill.

The winner was Aaron-Ryan Samra, studying a one year diploma in founda-

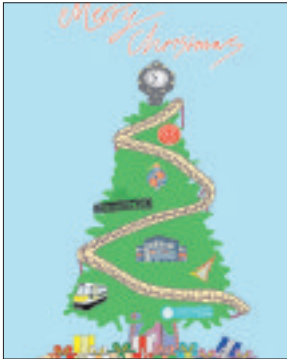
tion studies art and design. Other MPs go for something that shows where they work. Valerie Vaz, who represents Walsall South, went for an image of a ceiling boss depicting St Catherine from the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft at the Palace of Westminster.

David Winnick, Labour MP for Walsall North, chose one of the Elizabeth Tower, which houses Big Ben.

The photograph was taken by Catherine Bebbington and is part of the official selection chosen by the Commons Speaker John Bercow.

Official

Lichfield Conservative Michael Fabricant, who has been highly critical of Mr Bercow's conduct this year and called for him to go over his treatment of a former Clerk of the House, has not gone with the official selection. Instead he has used a photograph of Westminster in the snow, taken from the Terrace of the Commons, on the side near the Thames that the public does not get to see. "It was taken by a friend of mine,



Stourbridge MP Margot James's card

Sir John Randall MP, and I made a few Photoshop changes to bring out the colours," Mr Fabricant said.

David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg opted for starkly different styles for their final festive cards before the general election battle.

The Prime Minister has signalled his intent with a statesmanlike photograph outside 10 Downing Street. A besuited Tory leader is shown standing alongside wife Samantha, and flanked by Chelsea Pensioners.

Mr Miliband, meanwhile, has opted for a more personal touch. The Labour leader – who has faced criticism for struggling to connect with ordinary voters – sits at a table at his London home with wife Justine and their sons, five-year-old Daniel and Samuel, four.

But Liberal Democrat leader Mr Clegg and wife Miriam have joined the trend for "photoboothing". The couple are shown in a series of passport-style shots, with the Deputy Prime Minister donning a Santa hat before holding up a sign saying "Merry Christmas!".

WEEK IN POLITICS

with Daniel Wainwright

DAVID Winnick knows a thing or two about liberty and freedom, so it was a surprise to hear him raise the prospect of fining people who don't turn out to vote.

The long-serving MP for Walsall North was responsible for Tony Blair's first Commons defeat on a whipped vote when, in 2005, he rebelled over Labour's planned 90-day detention 28 days without trial of terror suspects.

He put forward an amendment limiting it to 28 days and won. In a week when the CIA has been shamed for its use of torture and we were reminded that a British citizen is still in Guantanamo Bay 12 years after being detained, without a conviction, Mr Winnick must have been fully aware of the context of his proposal.

For while he is adamant that it is a democratic right to vote, what he wants the Commons to discuss in a 10-minute Rule Bill in January is the democratic right not to vote.

He proposes that it be made a civic obligation to vote, or at the very least make clear one's intention to abstain. Effectively then, being apathetic about politics would attract a fine.

Mr Winnick suggests something like the Australian system, where voting has been compulsory since the 1920s and turnout has been consistently above 90 per cent.

In Britain in 2010 it was 65 per cent. That was a slight improvement on 2005 but it meant one in three people did not bother to put anything on a ballot paper.

Even if they had scrawled 'none of the above' on their paper and spoiled it, that would still have counted as turning out.

In the elections for the West Midlands police and crime commissioner it was even more dire. Barely one in 10 registered a preference.

The Government had offered democratic accountability for people overseeing the police force and the electorate either did not understand what it was they were being offered or did not care.

Mr Winnick's worry is that, left unchecked, there will come a time when a government is elected and fewer than half the people had their say on it.

Anyone who cares about the democratic process would share that concern.

What Mr Winnick and his fellow MPs must address in their debate, however, is why it has come to this.

The argument that the parties are all the same no longer applies now that New Labour is over. There is an enormous difference between Labour and the Tories in terms of policy.

Yet among the leaders – Oxford graduates, career politicians etc – there isn't a fat lot. And it is also pretty rare in General Elections to see just those two parties on the ballot paper. People have plenty of choice. They just aren't using it.

star★extraTRAVEL ICELAND – Reykjavík and the Northern Lights

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The fascinating city of Reykjavik with its brightly painted wooden buildings stand out in sharp contrast to the stunning beauty of its setting of water, ice and lava fields. With a host of restaurants, bars, cafes and shops selling goods that are no longer eye-wateringly expensive, justifies its claim to be amongst Europe's most 'happening' cities.

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Budget consultation causes storm

FURTHER to the prominence given to the criticisms of Walsall 'independent' Cllrs Bott and Smith, both of the cost and intent of the Labour Council's budget consultation...

Did I miss something, or were they not silent this time last year when the Conservative-led authority held a less ambitious and arguably less meaningful consultation on how to save the huge sums of money the Government required and requires of this and local authorities generally?

Could this possibly be a case of Labour

being fair game for these two former Labour Party members, whereas last year, it might just have been seen as a case of not biting the hand of those who fed you?

Just like the people of Walsall whose ideas we are canvassing about how to 'get out from under' in the context of the unprecedented cuts that Westminster is imposing, perhaps Cllrs Bott and Smith might give us and the public the benefit of their constructive suggestions?

CLLR RICHARD WORRALL
Rushall Shelfield Ward

Refreshing New Square

HAVING spent time yesterday in New Square, West Bromwich, can I just say what a pleasure it was to shop, go to the cinema and dine afterwards in such pleasant and safe surroundings.

Congratulations to Sandwell Council and my comment is that if this is what a Labour-controlled council can produce for their residents and visitors let us hope that now we have a Labour-controlled council in Walsall they can achieve the same or similar results from the stagnated position and awful town centre that our previous Conservative Council managed to leave for us.

What on earth have Walsall Council been doing in the past? A development like New Square is a breath of fresh air and a pleasure to visit.

P J BROWN
Shelfield

Religion's silence on Madeleine

DECEMBER 4, a letter was published about religion by B Woodhall.

It certainly deserved its place at the top of the letters page.

However, I would like to move the content a bit further on.

These religious leaders with their fancy titles, Reverend and Most Reverend, tell us that the God they worship sees all that happens on this Earth.

None of them can communicate with God; and neither can anyone else in this country.

By communication I mean ask a question and receive an answer.

Seven years ago three-year-old Madeleine McCann disappeared.

Since then from all religious organisations, a deafening silence.

Dear reader, if you disagree with my letter, then you must do the honourable thing, communicate with God and hand the answer in to your nearest police station.

J GREGORY
Willenhall

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Walsall Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

E-MAIL

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Views sought, but strange questions

IMPORTANT as it is for councils to consult over their budget reductions proposals both to keep local people better informed and, address the democratic deficit prevalent in council engagement, the methods they use often have a direct impact on the feedback they will receive.

While attending a local library event my attention was drawn to a questionnaire on local library services.

The questionnaire itself was poorly set out and, weighted which detracted from the respondents' likelihood to reply.

However, in the personal details section, which is optional, people are asked about their sexuality. A question asks if the respondent

is the same sex now as they were at birth.

Can anyone explain what impact this information, should anyone decide to provide it, will have on the council budget setting exercise?

Questions will always be raised about the cost of consultations, consultants' fees, but, when the methodology and content of a questionnaire are suspect, the use of public money on such dubious catch-all questionnaires must be challenged.

So how many people have had sex changes in Walsall? How will this information assist the council and, impact on the budget proposals? Will the public ever find out the figures? Absurd!

CLLR DOUG JAMES
Walsall

A legion of gratitude

ON behalf of The Royal British Legion Pelsall Branch, can I as Chairman and Poppy Appeal Organiser, thank the people of Pelsall for their extremely kind support.

The magnificent sum of £2,219.17 was raised, which is over £400 up on the same period of Remembrance the previous year.

A special thanks must go to all our junior schools and to our branch treasurer, Alan Dodsworth and David H Follows, as they have made a CD with all proceeds going to the poppy appeal.

KAREN CLIFFT
RBL Pelsall

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Groups set up to tackle issues

OBESITY, drug abuse and alcohol misuse in Walsall are being looked at by two new working groups that have been set up by health bosses in a bid to bring in changes which could tackle the issues head-on.

Health chiefs at Walsall Council have set up the groups to gather information and talk to health bosses, GPs and service providers in a bid to recommend changes surrounding how the authority and other agencies deal with these issues.

Report by Lisa O'Brien

The groups are made up of councillors, council officers and clinical commissioning group members and Walsall's health chief Ian Robertson claims it will help the council find the best use for its resources.

It comes as the cash-strapped authority is battling to save £86m over four years. It was revealed last month that obesity in the West Midlands was costing the public purse in the Black Country and Staffordshire almost £115 million a year, with an estimated £21.9m spent in Walsall on treating obese and overweight people.

The groups, which will be looking at both adult and childhood obesity problems as well as substance misuse, are expected to report back to the council's health and wellbeing board next year.

Councillor Robertson said: "They will be looking at things in greater

detail and coming up with a set of recommendations which can be adopted by the board and go to cabinet. They are looking at obesity in children and adults and drug and substance abuse.

"They are looking at the start of the problems, everything from the police to licensing officers. It might be that more healthy foods around schools could help or we may be able to work with partners. It might be that we support a minimum price for alcohol. We are looking at what is effective."

In October, it was revealed that in one year 119 people died of causes related to alcohol in Walsall. More than 378,000 people across the Black Country and Staffordshire ended up in hospital or needing NHS care because of drinking.

Cans you believe the generous donations of food?



Chairman of WATMOS Community Homes Glenn Martin is thrilled with the piles of food staff and tenants have donated

A HOUSING group has been flooded with food donations after it launched an appeal to support Black Country Foodbank this Christmas.

Generous tenants and staff at WATMOS Community Homes have, for several weeks been dropping off donations at its Lichfield Street, Walsall, office and eight estate offices. They have also held fundraising events including a coffee morning and raffle.

Black Country Foodbank helps vulnerable people in crisis through the provision of three days emergency food supplies while a longer-term solution can be found.

Glenn Martin, Chair of WATMOS, said: "Of course we must remember people are in difficulty all year round, not just at Christmas, and our staff and tenants plan on supporting this very worthwhile charity throughout 2015."

WATMOS Community Homes, which owns just over 2,700 homes for rent in Walsall, has now gathered in all the donations.

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MP proposes fines for those who avoid voting

VETERAN MP David Winnick has called on the Government to consider fines for people who do not turn out for voting.

The Walsall North MP famously locked horns with comedian Russell Brand who sparked controversy by claiming people should not bother voting.

MP David Winnick was mocked by the comedian as being something out of 'Dad's Army' when they met in a Commons committee. The long-serving MP for Walsall North has set himself against the outspoken comedian's call by proposing fines for anyone who does not at least positively abstain.

Mr Winnick, who has represented the constituency since 1979, is set to lead a 10-minute Rule debate in Parliament in January suggesting people who do not want to use their democratic right should have to notify council elections officers in advance or turn up to the polling station to state they do not want to vote for any candidate.

Preference

The Labour MP is concerned that voter turnout is falling all over the country as more and more people switch off from politics.

In the recent police and crime commissioner by-election in the West Midlands, barely one in 10 registered voters expressed a preference at all.

Mr Winnick wants to see Britain consider a system similar to Australia where people who do not vote, or do not at least expressly abstain, are fined. He has not suggested how much but in some parts of Australia it can be up to £30. He said: "I'm not in favour of forcing anyone to vote. But I want to raise whether it should be a civic obligation to vote or at least to state an



Anti-political stance, Russell Brand

intention to abstain. I want to look at whether anyone who does not want to vote should either have to notify their council in writing or go to a polling station. I would like to see the proposed measure as the beginning of a public debate on the issue."

The idea is the complete opposite to the one put forward by left-wing comedian Brand, who declared: "I am not voting out of absolute indifference and weariness and exhaustion from the lies, treachery and deceit of the political class that has been going on for generations."

Mr Winnick and Mr Brand met at the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2012 when the former drug addict comedian was asked for his views and



Voting move – MP David Winnick

experiences. But after he began behaving excitably, Mr Winnick told him he was not taking part in 'a variety show'

The comedian hit back at Mr Winnick saying: "You're providing a little bit of variety though, making it more like Dad's Army." Mr Winnick said: "His comments on voting were disgusting and an affront to those all over the world who have fought so hard for their democratic right..."

The lowest turnout in any constituency since the Second World War was in Liverpool Riverside in 2001 when just 34.1 per cent of people voted. When Mr Winnick was first elected in Walsall in 1979, turnout in his constituency was more than 72 per cent. In 2010 was 55.5 per cent.



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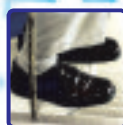
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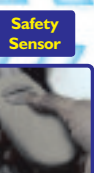
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Golden girl Jodie takes festive run in her stride

TRIATHLON star Jodie Stimpson spread some Yuletide sparkle when she graced the starting line of the Sneyd Striders' festive run.

The 25-year-old, who took two gold medals in the Commonwealth Games, was guest-of-honour at the club's annual Christmas Pudding run in Willenhall.

Jodie, from Oldbury, put on a dazzling display, romping home well ahead of the rest of the 500-strong field with either a five or 10-mile race.

Runners, some of them beginners, were thrilled to be competing in the same event as the champion who has recently returned from a training stint in Kenya and is aiming to make GB's 2016 Olympics squad. The club's cross-country captain Kate Christian said: "It was fantastic for them and all of us to have Jodie there."

Schedule

"She's a local girl and supports us whenever she can. It was good of her to come, given her busy training schedule."

The event was a chance for less serious runners to get dressed up in Christmas costumes and have a bit of fun. The route was awash with red-suited Santas, elves and, taking the name of the race to heart, even a Christmas pudding. Vernon Way in Bloxwich was closed between Sneyd Lane and Crab Lane to allow runners to take part in the two-lap course. They chose between five and 10-mile distances.

All finishers were given goody bags containing a Christmas pudding, coaster, chocolate bars, pens and a banana. Striders' spokesman Kate Christian said: "We had 19 complete beginners join us in September, some who couldn't run to the next lamp post, and six of those completed the 10-mile course. A few were quite emotional when they passed the finish line. Most of the rest ran the five-mile event. It was a fantastic achievement."



Jodie at the start with other runners



Thumbs-up - Sally Anne Harper



Red nosed Sandra Stokes on the run



Jodie Stimpson was the first lady



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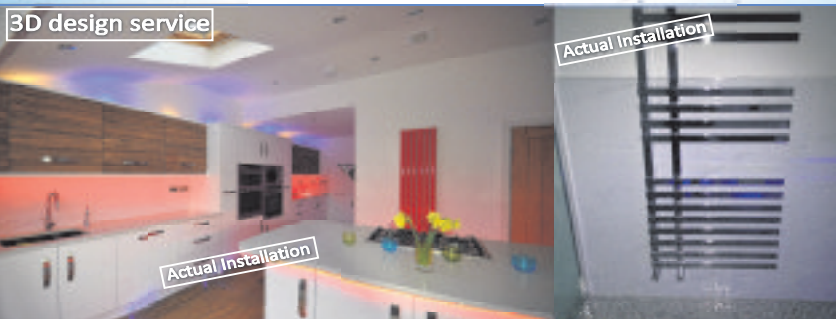
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Team celebrates 15th year of health walks

THOUSANDS of people have benefited from a weekly health walks programme in Walsall which has celebrated its 15th anniversary.

Walsall Walk On, which is run by the council's sport and leisure services team, takes place across parks and countryside in the borough and is aimed at walkers of all ages and abilities.

There are organised walks at Willehall Memorial park, Walsall Arboretum, Aldridge Airport, Rough Wood local nature reserve and a string of other venues in the borough.

Each walk lasts between one and six miles and most follow a circular route ensuring the same start and finish point. Since its launch in 1999, it has been steadily growing in popularity every year with new walks being added all the time. Richard Upton, active lifestyles officer at Walsall Council, said the programme had grown from strength to strength.

One of the main factors behind the success of Walk On is the role of the volunteers. Each walk is led by a qualified leader assisted by a back marker meaning the walks are suitable for people of all speeds and abilities.

Mr Upton added: "The volunteers are the real key to the success of Walk On. Each walk requires a leader and back marker and we are always looking for more people to come forward and act as volunteers. If you can spare a bit of time each week we'd love to hear from you."

Regular walking has a number of benefits including helping weight loss, easing back pain and reducing the risk of heart disease. No booking is needed to join a walk. People are asked to turn up at the meeting point 15 minutes before the start time. A full list of walks is available at bit.ly/1dldvr9 or call 01922 658080.



Walk leaders Sue Cripps, Ray Beardsmore, Jacquie Orford, and Alan Lloyd

Epilepsy help over Christmas

HELP is at hand for people with epilepsy needing to talk to someone during the festive season.

Epilepsy Society's helpline operators will be waiting on 01494 601400 (national call rate) to answer questions, give up-to-date information, and to give callers time to talk and emotional support this Christmas.

Christine Brock, the charity's helpline manager, said: "Christmas can be a difficult and stressful time for many people. Our helpline is open for any-

one with epilepsy who has concerns, or for anyone who is worried about a family member or friend."

During the holiday period the confidential epilepsy helpline will be open;

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The helpline will be back to normal from 2 January 2014.



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Cleopatra help teen on way to her dream



Yonah Higgins, of Cleopatra, Janet Lewis, Charlotte Bailey, Shanaay Lumsden, Mark Anthony, Hugo Nsio, Mel Harris and Zainam Higgins, of Cleopatra

A TEEN singer was among the winners of a talent contest that attracted hundreds of people in Walsall. Charlotte Bailey, aged 17, of Wolverhampton, topped the vocalist category at the Striving to Achieve Results (STAR) YouthTalent competition.

The Highfield School pupil won £250 in cash and a chance to record music in a studio after she impressed the celebrity panel of judges at the finals held at the Goldmine Centre. Pop group Cleopatra, Great Sewing Bee contestant Jenni Taylor and celebrity hair stylist Desmond Murray helped to pick the winners from three categories, which were all given £250 for their efforts.

Brownhills dance tutor Melanie Harris and music producer Mark Anthony were also judges.

A total of 150 young people aged from 12 to 19 competed in heats held across the region. Fashion design winners were Walsall sisters Roshelle Natalia and Shaanay Lumsden. Roshelle, aged 16, will go on work experience at Harvey Nichols, in Birmingham, while Shaanay, aged 13, will receive a pamper treat there.

Dance champion was Hugo Nsio, aged 18, of West Bromwich, who is attending master classes with Sky's Got To Dance competition winners Duplic8.

Three not a crowd as library cuts loom

ONLY three people turned up to a public meeting over controversial library cuts in Walsall – and two of those were a Tory parliamentary candidate and a supporter of his.

The third person was a masters student from Coventry University who was using the meeting as research for her degree thesis. Seating for more than 50 people had been set up at Central Library on Saturday December 13.

People were advised to book in advance of the meeting due to the expected high turn-out over plans to close half the borough's libraries. The meeting, which went ahead regardless, was delayed for 20 minutes to allow for late arrivals. But when no-one else turned up, Walsall's head of libraries Sue Grainger went ahead and gave her presentation.

Expensive

Douglas Hansen-Luke, the parliamentary Conservative candidate for Walsall North, who was there, said the people on the platform outnumbered the audience. He counted five council staff in attendance, including the tea lady.

"The sight of all those empty seats was not an auspicious start. When you consider that the consultation was set up to save money, it turned out to be quite an expensive exercise.

"My initial suspicion was that the timing, on a Saturday just before Christmas when many people would be busy shopping, was deliberate by the Labour group." It could also be that, with books so much cheaper than they used to be, that librarians

are not as important as they were as a book-lending service. It's a great shame that no-one else turned up because the presentation was a very good one."

The public session was one of a series being held to garner views on proposed library cuts. Council chiefs have earmarked eight for the axe. The borough's draft budget plan lists sites in Pheasey, Streetly, Beechdale, South Walsall in Delves, and Walsall Wood for closure next year to save £565,722 to £385,092. Three others – in Blakenall, New Invention and Rushall – are down to close the following year to save £180,630 if the proposals get the go-ahead.

Independent councillor Pete Smith, who has criticised the consultation, called the process 'a costly farce.'

Leisure chief Councillor Khizar Hussain said they were 'disappointed' by the turn-out. "We felt that a Saturday morning would give people who worked during the week the chance to attend, listen to the proposals and have their say."

by Marion Brennan

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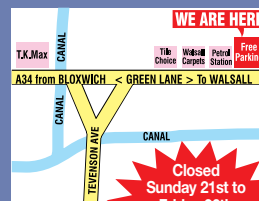
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Dog food donated by pet accessories firm



Ancol's director Simon Lane donates dog food to Tracey Griffin from Aldridge Animal Rescue

A PET accessories manufacturer has donated more than 100 bags of dog food to rescue centres across the region as part of its annual Christmas giveaway.

Ancol, which is based in Leamore Lane, Walsall, gave the food away to 11 rescue centres including Birmingham Dogs Home Sunnyside in Wolverhampton, CAARS Animal Rescue in Essington, the Retired Greyhound Trust in Wolverhampton and Aldridge Animal Rescue.

Ancol sales director Sarah Lane said: "We are proud to support our local rescue centres as they do such a fantastic job looking after and rehoming dogs.

"We hope this donation of food will help ensure that all their dogs are well fed this Christmas."

Aldridge Animal Rescue, which mainly helps dogs but also looks after sheep, horses and other animals, is run by a team of volunteers with a support network of foster homes.

Volunteer Tracey Griffin said: "We rely on donations and it's great to be given so much quality food. Thank you Ancol."

Organisers pull out all the stops in record bid

ORGANISERS of an appeal to raise £100,000 to revamp the Darlaston Town Hall organ have unveiled plans for a Guinness Book of Records playing relay attempt.

It will be held in April as part of activities to promote the heritage project and raise cash to carry out vital repairs.

Organists, town halls and churches across the region are being invited to pull out all the stops for the event that will see as many of them as possible take turns to play to get into the record books.

The idea is to create a chain of organs being played across the area.

Campaigners Mervin Jones and Councillor Doug James joined forces to launch a fundraising drive to improve it for future generations. They also hope to attract lottery cash to help cover the cost of the work on the instrument that was built 111 years ago.

It needs repairs to its pedal board, pipe workings and the pneumatic action that makes the sound.

Councillor James says: "In April we'll attempt to get into the Guinness

Book of Records with organ playing at a chain of organs across the region. We were hoping to do it before Christmas but the records' team that will come to supervise our effort has been very busy this year.

"We're aiming to do the record attempt in April.

"We're going ahead with all the events planned, but may have to use other venues in the town as well as the town hall to keep down costs."

Musicians lending a hand with the effort include Britain's Got Talent contestant Jean Martyn and folk singer Tim Martin. Other fundraising activities include a Black Country Night on January 24 and a Valentine dance on February 14.



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SOURCE: The Newspaper Society - Consumer Catalyst 2014

Single-minded festive hope

STAFF at a family pub with a children's play centre have been keeping their fingers crossed that they might be in the charts at Christmas with a charity CD single.

The Broadway, in Lichfield Road, Willenhall, is going head to head with some of the world's top artists for the coveted number one spot – including X Factor winner Ben Haenow and Bob Geldof's Band Aid 30.

The pub chain's Wacky Warehouse band the Little Singers have recorded a version of the festive hit song 'Rockin' Around The

Christmas Tree' along with a music video. Some of the profits will be donated to BBC Children in Need.

The group is made up of youngsters, aged four to eight. Their song, is available from iTunes, was given odds of 100/1 to get the number one slot by betting firm Ladbrokes.

Broadway boss Gavin Salter said: "It's very exciting to be in the race for Christmas number one." The single can be downloaded from <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/album/rockin-around-christmas-tree>

Lake drowning man was over limit to drive

A MAN who drowned in a Walsall Arboretum lake had just crashed his car while twice the drink drive limit, a coroner's court heard. Christopher Mills, aged 26, was driving his yellow Renault Megane when it hit a garden fence on Buchanan Avenue on April 15.

Smethwick Coroner's Court heard Mr Mills, known locally as 'Milley', had made off into the park. He was wearing a cast on his right leg, and was with his friend Danny Green after the crash. The pair then jumped numerous fences to get away. Coroner Zafar Siddique gave a conclusion of accidental death.

Pupils try trench life



Ormiston youngsters enjoy the Gaia 3D Virtual Trench app

STUDENTS at a Walsall school worked with a top software firm to design a new educational computer resource which is helping teachers to bring The First World War to life.

The Gaia 3D Virtual Trench app was created by specialist software development company Gaia Technologies – with help from students at Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy, in Pelsall, which is sponsored by Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT).

Gaia 3D Virtual Trench is a 3D simulation of life in the trenches. It uses a game-based platform, which many students will be familiar with, to provide cross-curricular opportunities for learning about the 1914-18 period. Students can explore different aspects of life in the trenches, and learn more about the extraordinary four years which changed the world forever. To commemorate the centenary of the start of the Great War, Gaia Technologies are offering the free teaching resource to all schools within the UK.

Michael Murphy, 3D Learning Leader at Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy, said: "The app is absolutely fantastic, and teaching in 3D eradicates the time lost in lessons." "I definitely recommend to other teachers that they download and utilise this wonderful resource."

New ward set to open Regeneration on the agenda at summit

A NEW multi-million pound ward to cope with rising admissions at Walsall Manor Hospital is due to open on January 12, it has emerged.

The £4.7m ward with 30 beds is being created on the site off Pleck Road, creating extra capacity in busier periods. It will also be available for patients to be transferred to when redecoration or cleaning work is needed.

It is part of moves to improve resources at the Manor, which has been faced with more patients from Staffordshire.

AROUND 70 suppliers and traders met with developers to learn about potential work through multi-million pound regeneration schemes. A Meet the Buyer event was held at Walsall College to discover about construction projects.

These involved the college's £11m business and sports hub and contracts related to the Jhootts Pharmacy HQ in the Gigaport development and the £26m Darlaston highways improvement scheme.

Representatives from the three major contractors – Dawnus Construction, Interserve and Jessup Brothers were present and then met with the firms to discuss the supply requirements for each scheme.

Regeneration chief, Councillor Mohammad Nazir said: "We were very pleased with how well the event went and it gave our developers the opportunity to introduce themselves to a number of local contractors and suppliers who could potentially work with them on these major schemes."

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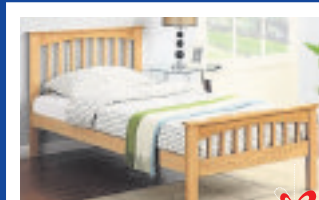
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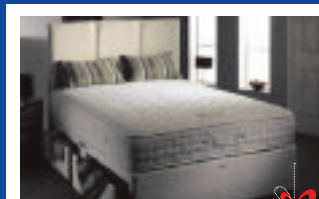
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Consultant Lizz 07738 239226

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Monday 7.30pm

Consultant Karen 079571 88374

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& 7.00pm

Consultant Becki 07914 451601

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Consultant Debbie 07983 424551

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ALDRIDGE

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(formerly Struggling Monkey)

Northgate WS9 8BD

Friday 9.30am

Consultant Georgie 07947 271375

Hundreds back call for action on lines



Postmaster Peter Badhan inspects the double yellow lines

HUNDREDS of people have backed a petition calling for double yellow lines that were painted overnight outside Darlaston Post office to be removed.

Postmaster Peter Badhan was furious to find that the former 30-minute stay parking bays that had been at the front of his shop, in Victoria Road, were replaced by the lines.

Now 300 customers have signed a petition in protest against the move calling on Walsall Council's highways department to have a change of heart.

Mr Badhan said: "It's a bad situation for us because people who used to park there are finding more difficult to get to us. I have been told that someone from the council is coming to see me about it, but they haven't turned up as yet. We've got about 300 names on the petition."

Bentley and Darlaston North representative Councillor Rose Burley said while the changes were made due to parking issues in a nearby street, she has requested that highways officers visit Mr Badhan to discuss the matter.

"I am still on the case," Councillor Burley added.

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Call for lower taxation to revive pubs industry

LOWER taxes, a cut in VAT and a relaxation of the smoking ban – could these measures save the British pub?

They are the recommendations in a report on the closure of more than 6,000 pubs since 2006 which blames taxation and red tape more than changes in people's drinking habits.

The report, Closing Time – Who's killing the British pub, released by the Institute of Economic Affairs, claims that the rapid acceleration of pub closures had been caused by the alcohol duty escalator, policies such as the smoking ban and declining real wages as a result of the recession.

It has seen the number of pubs plummeting from just over 58,000 in 2006 to 48,000, a drop of nearly 20 per cent. Even landmark pubs once popular with football fans have not been spared. The Wanderer by Wolves' Molineux stadium is being turned into a car park despite a petition by 2,000 people to save it.

Other pubs with Wolves connections are also at risk. Lounge 107, formerly The Goal Post, could be knocked down and replaced with an Asda petrol station, while planning permission has been granted for The Kings Arms, in Dudley Road, Blakenhall, to be turned into shops. The latter pub served as the club's headquarters in the 19th century.

Meanwhile, Wolverhampton University plans to transform The Feathers, also on Molineux Street, into student facilities.

And the former Nags Head in Tip-ton is to be turned into shops and flats after sitting empty for years.

A campaign is currently underway to save the Marston's-owned the Seven Stars on Gospel End Road, Sedgley, which faces being turned into



The Seven Stars pub in Gospel End Road, Sedgley which may become a shop



Filling station scheme – The Goal Post Pub, Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton a supermarket.

Report author Christopher Snowden said government policy had 'actively discouraged' people from spending time in the pub, suggesting that alcohol duty and VAT must be lowered and 'one-size-fits-all' policies such as the smoking ban must be reconsidered to end the 'downward spiral'.

While there had been a 16 per cent fall in beer purchases in the off trade since 2003, a 54 per cent fall in beer purchases in pubs meant they were

selling half as much as they did 11 years ago. The report suggests a halving of alcohol duty, a reduction of VAT to 15 per cent and a lower rate of VAT for food sold in pubs and restaurants, a relaxation of the smoking ban and the abolition of cumulative impact zones.

UKIP MEP Bill Etheridge said: "The great British pub is a focal institution in local communities and the impact of taxation, regulation and declining real wages since the recession has had a devastating impact on the

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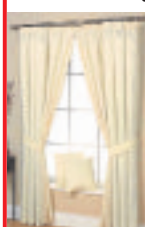


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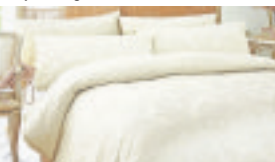
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TV designer Julia turns teacher



Designer Julia Kendall who spoke to the trainees at Walsall College's design and decorating academy

IT'S the masterclass of dreams for wannabe interior designers – an afternoon with DIY SOS star Julia Kendall.

And students got to realise just that when the TV stylist visited Walsall to share secrets of the trade. The unflappable interior designer, best known for her work on the popular BBC show, was at Walsall College for a teaching stint – hoping to inspire the next generation of home stylists.

She was asked by Homebase to visit the company's Design and Decorating Academy at the Littleton Street West campus which runs a year-long training programme for design enthusiasts among its staff. The course includes learning from leading industry experts as well as being taught the tricks of the trade from Homebase suppliers such as Dulux, Harris and Graham & Brown.

Julia, whose relationship with Dragons' Den tycoon Duncan Bannatyne recently ended, said: "I'm delighted to be able to offer my knowledge, experience and guidance to the students over the duration of their course."

A total of 14 students completed a City and Guilds training course, designed and delivered by college staff.

Bus fares to bring in cash for new fleet

HIGHER bus fares will help pay for a new £34 million fleet of buses in the West Midlands, bosses say.

National Express has announced increases of around five per cent for most of its journeys. The changes, which come into effect on January 2, will see adult single tickets rise from £2.10 to £2.20.

A daysaver ticket goes up 20p to £4.20 while weekly travelcards will cost £16.50, up 50p. Monthly travelcards will increase by £1.50 a month. Other increases include a child single fare which has risen 5p to £1.10 and a child four-week travelcard which has gone up 75p to £29.25.

However some fares have been frozen, including a family daysaver ticket.

Bosses said bus travel in the West Midlands was still 'great value' when compared to driving and parking, while adding that paying for travelcards by direct debit would save money.

Peter Coates, managing director for National Express West Midlands said: "We have kept the changes to our fares to a minimum and worked hard to ensure that family fares are frozen for the third year running. These changes will allow us

Report by Tim Spiers

to invest a record amount on new buses next year, deliver new services such as Platinum and roll out our London style smartcard."

The £34m will be spent on 171 new British-built buses.

It will include 58 state-of-the-art two tone grey and black Platinum vehicles. These will have drivers in suites and run on premium routes.

The bulk of the fleet will have a distinctive fresh livery in a two tone maroon with cream lines.

The investment will meet the pledge made by the Transforming Bus Partnership involving public transport co-ordinator Centro and National Express that 300 new buses would be introduced in two years up to the end of 2015.

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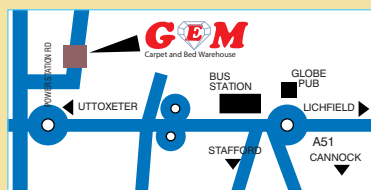


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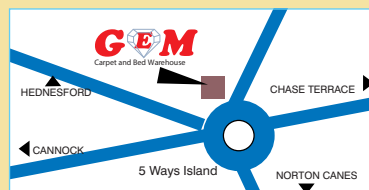


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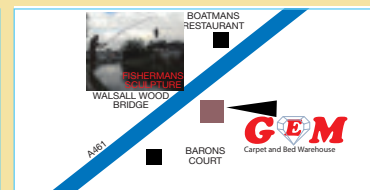


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Sofa Factory Outlet's Thomas Street showrooms in Wolverhampton



In stock, a fantastic range of leather sofas from Italy

COMMERCIAL FEATURE

CUSTOMER care is key to the success of the Sofa Factory Outlet, so it's no wonder that an increasing number of people are making it their first port of call.

Visit their showrooms in Thomas Street, Wolverhampton and you'll find the best value, high quality, beautiful and comfortable sofas combined with the best customer service in the industry.

The company have recently started to stock a fantastic range of leather sofas from Italy which complements their existing hand-made sofas that are manufactured locally in the Black Country by skilled craftsmen and guaranteed for up to 10 years.

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in what is truly a bespoke service from conception to completion.

In addition, the company's "Price Promise" is your assurance that wherever you go, you won't beat The Sofa Factory Outlet on price and furthermore no money changes hands until the job is completed, yet another guarantee that the customer is getting exactly what is specified.

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Pub site homes move approved

THE transformation of a former arson-hit pub site to create homes has received the final go-ahead from council planners.

The old Dolphin Inn in Walsall was demolished after going up in flames in 2006 and the left unused since. There have been previous problems with rubble being thrown from the site in Goscoe Lane and horses being tethered.

Other plans for the site have included apartments, but initial proposals for 39 homes were turned down amid layout concerns. Further schemes have failed to get off the ground but the council has approved the details of this latest plan by Gora Developments.

The fire in December 2006 destroyed 90 per cent of the roof.

Chiefs' pledge on backing business

REGENERATION chiefs insist they want to support businesses after ditching proposals to introduce new parking charges.

Walsall Council made a U-turn on plans to introduce fees on free car parks within Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall.

Campaign group Willenhall Ay We collected more than 2,000 names on a petition to oppose the move and objections were also made in Bloxwich.

Regeneration chief, councillor Mohammed Nazir, said: "Borough wide we are working to support and improve business opportunities but we won't forget local communities who have, in the past, been ignored."

Medic admits he failed in duty of care over death

A PARAMEDIC has admitted failing in his duty of care after a man collapsed and died outside an A&E department.

Matthew Geary, aged 36, from Manor Avenue, Great Wyrley, pleaded guilty to failing to discharge his relevant duty by not taking reasonable care of Carl Cope, at Wolverhampton Crown Court last Monday.

by John Scott

He admitted he did not provide a 'prompt and proper' examination after 47-year-old Mr Cope collapsed outside Walsall Manor Hospital on June 23, 2012. Geary further conceded that he failed to quickly start resuscitation of Mr Cope, who had suffered a fatal heart attack.

It is understood that the victim, who lived in Parker Street, Bloxwich, had gone to the hospital earlier in the day with chest pains and collapsed after momentarily stepping outside the building.

Outlined

No further details were given to the court when Geary entered his guilty plea but Judge John Warner was told the defendant was no longer a paramedic with West Midlands Ambulance Service.

The case was adjourned to a date to be fixed and the full facts will be outlined when Geary is sentenced.

Judge Warner gave the defendant bail but warned that this would not 'tie the hands' of the court in

deciding the appropriate outcome. A paramedic was sacked, one resigned and an emergency medical technician and emergency care assistant at West Midlands Ambulance Service were both given final written warnings after an internal probe into the incident.

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, which runs the Manor, also conducted its own internal investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr Cope. This was concluded in October 2012 and as a result four members of staff were sacked and two others disciplined.

Trust chief executive Richard Kirby said it was a serious incident and the organisation would 'learn from the mistakes made and ensure that these events are not repeated'. He added: "I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the family of Mr Cope and apologise for the failings. The level of care provided to this patient was unacceptable."

Gold medallist speaks to students



Back from left, students Daniel Cutting-Tennant, Daniel Booth, Lauren Ferguson, Mark Lent, Star Wilkes, Callum Lerigo and Millie Taylor, with Amy Williams and headteacher Peter Mayland

BRITAIN'S first Winter Olympic gold medallist in 30 years was the guest of honour at a school's annual presentation evening.

Amy Williams was invited along to St Thomas More Catholic School to meet students and she gave an inspirational speech. The 32-year-old won a gold medal in the skeleton bobsleigh event at the 2010 Winter Olympics.

At the presentation event she told students: "I won a gold medal in the skeleton bobsleigh in 2010 and our country doesn't even have an ice track.

"You have to pursue your dreams. I had been an athlete but was prone to injury so I went down to the push track at Bath University in my home town and thought I'll give this a go.

"I then paid my own way on to an Army camp to go to a real ice track in the Alps and simply worked harder and harder every day to follow my dream; and you know one day I woke up and was the Olympic champion."

Miss Williams is one of the presenters on the BBC Gadget Show and an ambassador for British winter sports.

St Thomas More headteacher Peter Mayland said: "As our first Winter Olympics gold medallist in 30 years, Amy has obviously overcome every obstacle in her path and what is more enjoyed every moment of the journey. She is one of our great Britons and a wonderful role model."

Students who picked up awards included Daniel Cutting-Tennant, aged 16, Daniel Booth, 15, Lauren Ferguson, 19, Mark Lent, 18, Star Wilkes, 18, Callum Lerigo, 18 and Millie Taylor, 17.

Yodel set to create parking for HGVs

PARCEL delivery firm Yodel is looking to create more HGV parking spaces, under expansion plans which could lead to more jobs.

The firm, which has a main sorting centre on the Willenhall and Darlaston border, is looking to use land next to the site. It will see up to 105 spaces available for lorries at the firm which will help it to grow by enabling more trailers.

The land which is currently leased accommodates 70 parking spaces. However, this is due to expire with return to the control of the freehold owner.

The application for spaces on land between Owen Road and Willenhall Road has been lodged with Walsall Council. It states: "The extension of the HGV parking area will safeguard the facility for the long term and will allow for future expansion by providing a net gain in trailer spaces which will in turn will allow for future job growth as demand increases."

Darlaston councillor Chris Bott backed the plans. She said: "It will be a good move, if they expand it will create more jobs."

The Yodel campus as a whole employs around 280 staff, with 260 drivers, sorters and loaders working on a shift basis.

The company, which handles more than 145 million parcels per year, has been recruiting 5,000 part-time and full-time staff across the UK for the Christmas peak.

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Charles Mears stands in the doorway of the butcher's shop in 1931



Gladys and June Mears at the shop in the 1960s



Gary Palmer and Ed Mears at the Great Wyrley shop as it stands today



Bert Mears pictured during the Second World War



Charles Mears, far right, with his family around 1900

Still bringing home bacon – 100 years on

IT started life in a humble wooden shed, but 100 years later is still bring home the bacon.

Who would have known that when Charles Mears opened his butchery business back in the autumn of 1914 it would still be going strong a century down the line?

And not only has Mears Butchers – or E&S Mears as it's known in Great Wyrley – become one of the most well-known names in the village, but it has also turned out generation after generation of highly-skilled butchers.

These days, it has the sort of loyal customer base that most businesses can only dream of, with some people visiting the shop week in, week out for the past 60 years – and showing no signs of stopping anytime soon.

The business was started by father-of-four Charles Mears a century ago, when he was also joined by his oldest son Bert. But when

MEMORY LANE

By Craig Hughes

the First World War broke out, Bert was called up to serve with the Royal Artillery and younger siblings Leonard and Wilfred stepped up to the plate.

In 1919, the family-run business moved to where Wyrley Fish Bar now stands, but then Charles acquired land at the third and final Walsall Road site in 1923.

A slaughterhouse was built and then the shop opened in 1930, where it has been ever since.

Bert had left to work at another butchers in Stafford while Leonard then went on to open his own Mears shop off Bloxwich Road, Leamore, in the 1930s before he passed away in 1964.

Charles was forced to come out of retirement in the 1940s to help son Wilfred and his wife Gladys run the butchers. This was while his grandson Percy, who after moving on from the meat industry in 1973

worked at Sainsbury's in Walsall, served in the Second World War.

It was then that current owner Edwin, the son of Wilfred, joined the well-established butcher's, and the present manager Gary Palmer came on board from school in 1975.

Edwin left the shop in 1989 to work from his Belt View Farm in Bednall, Staffordshire, to rear the likes of pigs, sheep and cows for the business.

His daughter Emma joined in 1995 from Stafford College to add cakes and pies to the produce.

Quality

Edwin, aged 65, remains as owner but no longer works at the shop. He said: "It is a well known name, we have always sold quality. There are some people who have been going for 50 to 60 years. We have got a lot of loyal customers."

"A few years ago I would have said it wouldn't survive but people are seeming to want a traditional butcher."

"I would like to see it carry on. It is an achievement to go 100 years."



Ed Mears, David McDonald and Gary Palmer, celebrate 100 years

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26 Choir kicks off festive celebrations

The Chronicle Thursday, December 25, 2014

Walsall Central Townwomen's Guild

CHAIRMAN Mrs Pat Jones welcomed everyone to the December 2 meeting and after all the formal business, she announced that the group would be entertained by 14 members who formed the WCTG choir.

Prior to the performance festive goodies, provided by members, were enjoyed, which set the Christmas theme. The programme consisted of carols and Christmas songs and the choir was greatly assisted by Ric Smith, a keyboard virtuoso and the husband of one of the members.

On Saturday December 6 the South Staffs Federation Choir presented a Christmas carol service at St Martin's Church, Walsall.

This is an annual event which takes place at various locations and, as this year's chosen venue was local – combined with the fact that Federation chairman Mrs Patricia White belongs to WCTG – fellow members showed their support by hosting the event.

Refreshments, including seasonal mince pies, were very much appreciated by both the choir and the audience and the afternoon provided a wonderful start to the Christmas celebrations.

The next meeting of WCTG takes place on Tuesday January 6 at the Melish Room, Central Hall, Ablewell Street, Walsall, commencing at 7pm.

New members are always most welcome and should contact Mrs Janice Fussell, secretary, on 01922 631246.

Retiring chairman in gift for charity



Pat Pratt, Sarah Jones and Sue Booker

Highgate Ladies Probus Club

HIGHGATE Ladies Probus Club welcomed Sarah Jones from Breakthrough Cancer and Pat Pratt who has been undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

A cheque for £150 was presented to them by Sue Booker, retiring Probuc Club chairman.

Breakthrough Cancer was Mrs Booker's charity of choice during her year as chairman.

Highgate Ladies Probuc Club meets on the second Monday of each month at Broadway United Reform Church hall in Gillity Avenue, Walsall.

Meetings start at 10.15am and visitors are very welcome to join the friendly bunch of members.

Each month brings a different speaker, which is always interesting and entertaining.

Tea and coffee is served along with lots of laughs.

Christmas party followed by hilarious festive quiz

THE December meeting took the form of a Christmas party which was enjoyed by Guild members.

The winners of the 'best dressed table' competition were Pauline, Karen, Maureen, Jill, Sandra and Vera.

The party was followed by a Christmas quiz organised by Laura Hucker and carried out amid much hilarity.

The next guild meeting will include the annual auction of goodies. Meetings take place at 7.30pm on the second Monday of the month.

The guild meets in the Lichfield Suite at the Memorial Hall, Brownhills. There is plenty of parking space and the bus stops at the door.

For information on the group's activities call Mary on 01543 360890.

Brownhills Townswomen's Guild

Maddy brings a real carnival of music

Maddy Prior and The Carnival Band, Town Hall, Birmingham

WHEN it comes to putting on Christmas shows you would be hard pushed to top Maddy Prior and the Carnival Band with their Carols & Capers show.

With the band playing instruments which are not only unusual but have been specially made, some recreated from old drawings, and playing music, some of which is hundreds of years old, you have a good show without any-

thing else. But throw in the unmistakable voice and presence of Maddy Prior and a choir with at least 50 voices and you have a festive display which is both, rich, diverse and incredibly impressive.

When she was not singing or taking a back seat to the Carnival Band, Prior expressively swished around the stage in flowing skirts to the music which was diverse, complex and thoroughly enjoyable.

There were tunes straight out of the middle ages, traditional carols such as God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen and not so traditional such as A Boy Was Born In Bethlehem.

There was tinsel-a-plenty and festive tunes from Europe and even one with animal masks and impersonations. All in all it was a night of great music and spectacle which keeps the musical traditions of the UK alive.

Danny Farragher

Rusby's mug full of festivities

Kate Rusby Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LOOKING like a Christmas humbug in her black and white hooped dress and with obligatory tea mug in hand she greeted the assembled Birmingham audience with a massive 'ello!

She then launched into the first of her Christmas songs with Here We Come a Wassailing.

If you have seen Rusby's Christmas show before then you know it's pretty much the same format as the previous year but of course this time there were a few songs from her latest album Ghost thrown in.

With her assembled band which includes hubby Damian O'Kane and a small, but impressive, brass section she sang a mixture of traditional carols such as Joy To The World, Little Town of Bethlehem, Diadem and various versions of While Shepherds Watch.

Rusbyinfects you with her enthusiasm for the season and no matter how many times you see her you leave her show full of Christmas cheer.

REVIEWS



Harmonising – Jersey Boys line-up

Oh, What a Night at musical rollercoaster

Jersey Boys Alexandra Theatre

IT was fast and furious and I loved it – as did the packed Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham.

This Jersey Boys rollercoaster took you on a wonderful journey as it told the story of four boys from the wrong side of the tracks who wrote their own songs, invented their unique sound, and sold 175 million records.

Featuring hit after hit including Beggin', Oh, What a Night, Sherry, Walk Like a Man, Bye Bye Baby and many more, Jersey Boys is a story full of heart, humour,

and most importantly fantastic music.

Tim Driesen as Frankie Valli certainly has the voice for it. All telling their own stories throughout the show the four together – Sam Ferriday as Bob Gaudio, Lewis Griffiths as Nick Massi and Stephen Webb as Tommy DeVito – harmonised beautifully, almost bringing the audience to their feet just a third of the way through and of course up and dancing by the end.

This show runs until January 4. As a festive treat this is real gift.

Sue Attwater

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Walsall Council

Your Christmas Rubbish and Recycling arrangements 2014/15

Changes to your rubbish bin collection service (grey bin)

Normal collection day	Your next collection will be
Thursday 25 December 2014	Tuesday 30 December 2014 with up to 3 extra bags of rubbish
Friday 26 December 2014	Friday 2 January 2015 with up to 3 extra bags of rubbish
Tuesday 30 December 2014	Tuesday 6 January 2015 with up to 3 extra bags of rubbish
Thursday 1 January 2015	Thursday 8 January 2015 with up to 3 extra bags of rubbish
For operational reasons, extra bags of rubbish will be collected by a different crew.	

Changes to your recycling bin collection service (green bin)

Normal collection day	Your next collection will be
Thursday 25 December 2014	Tuesday 30 December 2014
Friday 26 December 2014	Friday 2 January 2015
Tuesday 30 December 2014	Tuesday 6 January 2015
Thursday 1 January 2015	Thursday 8 January 2015
For operational reasons no extra bags of recycling will be collected, please check our top 20 list to see what can go in your green recycling bin.	

Your garden waste collection service (brown bin)

There will be no garden waste collections from Friday 28th November 2014 until week commencing Monday 30th March 2015. Please check your bin collection calendar for your first brown bin collection of the spring. Alternatively contact us on the details below.

Your local tips

Local tips (Household Waste Recycling Centres) will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Open as usual on all other days. Shoes/textiles/batteries/wood/crockery and tiles/DVDs can all be recycled at your local tip.

Poor weather conditions

If we can't carry out normal collections due to poor weather conditions we will keep you updated by local radio, our website, facebook and twitter. We will also leave a recorded message on our contact centre number 01922 653344.

Christmas Tree Recycling

Date: Sunday 11 January 2015

Locations: Pelsall Road Depot overspill car parks area.

Willenhall Memorial Park.

Grange Depot extension car park

Time: 9.00am - 1.00pm

Should you require further information:

Telephone: 01922 653344

Website: www.walsall.gov.uk

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Christmas Day

BBC 1



Michael McIntyre's Very Christmassy Christmas Show, on at 10.40pm

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. **9.00 The Gruffalo** (R) **9.30 On Angel Wings** (R) **10.00 Come and Join the Celebration** Traditional service from St George's Church in Leeds. **11.00 Only Fools and Horses Christmas special** from 1986. Rodney dates an aristocrat's daughter. (R) **12.00 Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out** The animated heroes go to the moon. (R) **12.25 FILM: Gnomeo & Juliet** (2011) Animated comedy, with the voices of James McAvoy and Emily Blunt. ★★ **1.40 Shaun the Sheep** The animals decorate the farmhouse for Christmas. (R) **1.50 BBC News; Weather.** **2.00 Top of the Pops Christmas** The year's most successful chart acts

BBC 2



James May's Toy Stories: Action Man at the Speed of Sound, 5.10pm

6.00 FILM: Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas (2003) Animated adventure, with the voice of Brad Pitt. ★★ **7.15 FILM: Short Circuit** (1986) Sci-fi comedy adventure, starring Steve Guttenberg. ★★ **8.50 FILM: Pollyanna** (1960) Family drama, starring Hayley Mills. ★★ **11.00 Carols from King's** (R) **12.15 To the Manor Born** Audrey takes Christmas very seriously. (R) **12.45 The Choir: New Military Wives** Part two of two. The women perform at the Royal Albert Hall. (R) **1.45 60 Years of Carols from King's** The history of the annual Christmas service broadcast. **2.45 Kiss Me, Kate** at the Proms A performance of Cole Porter's musical at the Royal Albert Hall.

ITV



David calls at the bistro to see Nick in Coronation Street, on at 8.00pm

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **6.25 Pat & Stan** (R) **6.30 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures** (R) **6.40 Dino Dan** (R) **6.55 Sooty** (R) **7.05 Almost Naked Animals** Children's animation. (R) **7.40 Horrid Henry** (R) **7.55 Horrid Henry** (R) **8.10 Horrid Henry** (R) **8.25 Weekend at Christmas** New series. Aled Jones presents a festive edition of the chat show. **9.25 FILM: Valiant** (2005) Computer-animated adventure, with the voice of Ewan McGregor. ★★ **10.55 FILM: Back to the Future** (1985) Sci-fi comedy adventure, starring Michael J Fox. ★★ **1.10 FILM: Nanny McPhee** (2005) Period fantasy, starring Emma Thompson. ★★

Ch4



Sarah Millican, Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special, on at 9.00pm

6.00 FILM: The Ugly Duckling and Me (2006) ★★ **7.30 Prep & Landing** (R) **7.55 Prep & Landing: Naughty v Nice** (R) **8.20 Father Christmas** (R) **8.55 FILM: Animals United** (2010) ★★ **10.45 The Simpsons** (R) **11.15 The Simpsons** (R) **11.45 The Simpsons** (R) **12.15 Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas** Festive spin-off of the animated films, with the voice of John Leguizamo. (R) **12.45 The Snowman** Animated adventure, based on Raymond Briggs' festive tale. (R) **1.20 The Snowman and the Snowdog** (R) **1.50 The Alternative Christmas Message** **1.55 Channel 4 News Summary** **2.05 FILM: Scrooged** (1988) Christmas comedy, starring Bill Murray. ★★

Ch5



Justin Hawkins, Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs, on at 8.00pm

6.00 Milkshake! **9.10 Access** Showbiz news and gossip. **9.20 Andre Rieu: Christmas Around the World** A Christmas concert by the violinist, featuring sumptuously festive performances of White Christmas, Hallelujah and Jingle Bells. Part of Sing-Along Christmas Day. **10.20 FILM: Scrooge** (1970) A miserly man is taught the error of his ways by a host of spectral visitors. Musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, starring Albert Finney and Alec Guinness. ★★ **12.35 The Sound of Music - Live!** A novice nun brings joy into the lives of seven children when she becomes their governess. Adaptation of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical, starring Carrie Underwood. (R)

Early View

3.00 The Queen **3.10 Puss in Boots** (2011) Premiere. Animated comedy spin-off, with the voice of Antonio Banderas. ★★ **4.40 BBC News; Weather.** **5.00 Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special** Six previous contestants compete for the Christmas trophy. **6.15 Doctor Who** **7.15 Miranda** The hit sitcom returns for the final two episodes, which pick up where the last one left off, with the shop owner deciding whether to accept Gary or Mike's proposal. **7.50 Call the Midwife** Chummy is asked to help out at a mother-and-baby home whose residents have little in the way of Christmas cheer, while Cynthia assists two former patients of a psychiatric hospital. **9.00 EastEnders** Hour-long episode. Christmas Day gets off to a good start for the Carters but soon goes downhill when Sylvie arrives - and then Dean turns up. Cindy is alarmed by a suspicious gift. **10.05 Mrs Brown's Boys** The first of two festive editions. Mrs Brown tries to work out what is inside a parcel addressed to Cathy and discovers Rory is planning to have plastic surgery. **10.40 Michael McIntyre's Very Christmassy Christmas Show** An hour of festive entertainment, with Jamie Oliver, Rob Brydon, Barbara Windsor and Robbie Williams. **11.40 BBC News; Weather.** **11.55 On Christmas Night** Adjoa Andoh reflects on the implications of Jesus's birth for his mother. **12.00 Not Going Out Christmas Special** (R) **12.45 Would I Lie to You?** at Christmas (R) **1.15 George Michael at the Palais Garnier**, Paris (R) **2.15 FILM: The Heartbreak Kid** (2007) ★★ **4.05 Skiing Weather** **4.10 BBC News**

5.00 Sign Zone: The Queen Her Majesty's annual address. (R) **5.10 James May's Toy Stories: Action Man at the Speed of Sound** The Top Gear presenter attempts to propel an Action Man through the sound barrier. **6.15 Morecambe and Wise in Pieces: The Sketches** Penelope Keith presents another edition of the occasional series, this time trawling the archives for bite-sized routines from the comedy duo's shows. **7.15 Christmas University Challenge** Distinguished graduates of the universities of Edinburgh and Leeds compete, with novelist Philippa Gregory and football commentator Jacqui Oatley among the contestants. **7.45 Dad's Army** Mainwaring finds himself bidding against Pike for an orange at a fundraising bazaar. Last in the series. (R) **8.30 Blackadder's Christmas Carol** Kindly Victorian pushover Ebenezer Blackadder is visited by the Spirit of Christmas and gains an insight into the dastardly deeds of his ancestors. Starring Rowan Atkinson. **9.00 Tim Rice - A Life in Song** A concert from London's Royal Festival Hall celebrating the work of the Oscar-winning lyricist, who also reminisces about his career, in the company of Michael Grade. **10.30 Q! Christmas** Stephen Fry hosts a festive edition of the comedy quiz, with Carrie Fisher, Bill Bailey, Phill Jupitus and Alan Davies. **11.00 Marvellous** Fact-based feature-length comedy drama about the life of Neil Baldwin. Toby Jones stars. (R) **12.30 FILM: The Producers** (2005) ★★ **2.35 This is BBC Two**

3.00 The Queen Her Majesty's annual address. **3.10 The Queen's Garden** Part one of two. Exploring Buckingham Palace Garden. **4.10 ITV News and Weather** **4.20 Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas** Stop-motion animated adventure based on the film Elf. **5.20 New You've Been Framed! At Christmas** A festive selection of funny clips, narrated by Harry Hill. **5.50 Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs at Christmas** The comedian helps out at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home over the festive period. **6.50 ITV News and Weather** **7.00 Emmerdale** Hour-long episode. Bernice and Robert threaten Andy and Katie's wedding day. Laurel takes in an unwelcome dinner guest, Lachlan leads Belle astray and Jai proposes to Megan. **8.00 Coronation Street** Hour-long episode. Kylie is horrified when Callum turns up at her doorstep, Amy and Tony are taken aback by how much Steve has spent and Tracy grabs Tony under the mistletoe. **9.00 Downton Abbey** Lord Sinderby invites the Crawleys to a grouse-shooting party at Brancaster Castle, but the butler has an axe to grind and a scandalous secret threatens to derail the holiday. **11.00 ITV News and Weather** **11.15 You've Got to Love Christmas** Jane Horrocks narrates a comic trawl through the TV archives, guiding viewers through the pitfalls and perils of the festive season, with contributions from famous faces. (R) **12.15 Christmas Carols on ITV** A candlelit Christmas Eve carol service from St Mary's Church in Prestwich. (R) **1.15 FILM: Murder, She Wrote: The Celtic Riddle** (2003) Mystery, starring Angela Lansbury. ★★ **2.45 ITV Nightscreen** **5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show** (R)

4.00 Big (1988) Comedy, starring Tom Hanks. ★★ **6.00 Arthur Christmas** (2011) Premiere. Santa's son tries to make sure a girl accidentally missed off his father's list gets her presents. Animated comedy, with the voices of James McAvoy and Jim Broadbent. ★★ **8.00 Frozen at Christmas** The makers of Disney's Frozen, the most successful animated film of all time, talk about its creation and production, and the writing and performance of its most popular songs. **9.00 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special** Festive fun with the comedian and Terry Wogan, Sarah Millican, Dan Stevens, Emma Willis and Gino D'Acampo. Sam Smith, George Ezra and McBusted provide the music. Last in the series. **11.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Christmas Special** Jimmy Carr hosts a festive edition of the comedy panel show, with guests Andrew Flintoff, Kevin Bridges and Roisin Conaty joining team captains Sean Lock and Jon Richardson. (R) **12.00 Father Ted Christmas Special** Fathers Ted and Dougal endure their worst Christmas ever when they get lost in a lingerie department, leaving them in a highly embarrassing predicament. Festive edition from 1996. (R) **1.05 Father Ted** The priests go on holiday. (R) **1.35 Father Ted** The priests organise a raffle. (R) **2.00 Father Ted** Craggy Island's most famous religious relic is upgraded. (R) **2.30 FILM: Crazy Heart** (2009) A washed-up alcoholic country music star is granted a new lease of life when he falls for a journalist. Drama, starring an Oscar-winning Jeff Bridges, with Maggie Gyllenhaal. ★★ **4.25 Secret Eaters** (R) **5.20 Small Animal Hospital** A horse with hoof problems visits the vets. (R) **5.50 FILM: Flicka** (2006) Family drama, with Alison Lohman. ★★

3.25 Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (1968) Children's musical adventure, starring Dick Van Dyke. ★★ **6.10 Michael Buble's Christmas Songbook** The Canadian crooner sings Christmas classics and appears in a variety of comedy sketches, and is joined by Rod Stewart, Blake Shelton, Carly Rae Jepsen, Elmo and Oscar the Grouch. Part of the Sing-Along Christmas Day strand. (R) **7.05 Chas & Dave's Xmas Knees Up!** Festive entertainment from 1982, with guests including Eric Clapton, Jimmy Cricket, Jim Davidson, Albert Lee and Lennie Peters joining the Cockney duo. Part of Sing-Along Christmas Day. (R) **8.00 Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs** A countdown of songs guaranteed to make any Christmas party go with a swing, including classics by the Jackson 5, Jona Lewie, Band Aid, the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, and Slade. Part of Sing-Along Christmas Day. (R) **11.05 Muriel's Wedding** (1994) A downtrodden Abba-obsessed woman heads for the bright lights of Sydney to fulfil her dreams of the perfect wedding. Comedy, with Toni Collette, Bill Hunter and Rachel Griffiths. Part of Sing-Along Christmas Day. ★★ **1.20 SuperCasino** Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **4.00 House Doctor** Ann Maurice visits Headcorn in Kent, where she and Tris Payne try to create the illusion of space in a tiny cottage for a couple who want to sell up before they have a baby. (R) **4.25 House Doctor** A flat in Kensal Green, west London. (R) **4.50 Wildlife SOS** The work of an animal sanctuary. (R) **5.10 House Doctor** A property in Ashover Hay, Derbyshire. (R) **5.35 Wildlife SOS**

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Wishing you Christmas Cheer

Boxing Day

BBC 1



Nick says goodbye to his family in EastEnders, shown at 8.00pm

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. **9.00 FILM: Pinocchio (1940)** Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Dick Jones. **★ ★ ★ ★ 10.25 CBeebies Peter Pan** Musical adaptation of JM Barrie's tale. **11.05 Room on the Broom (R)** **11.30 FILM: Cool Runnings (1993)** Fact-based sporting comedy, starring John Candy. **★ ★ ★ 1.05 BBC News; Weather.** **1.15 BBC Regional News and Weather** **1.25 The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm** Comedy drama, starring Harry Hill as the absent-minded inventor. **(R)** **2.20 My Family Christmas Special** The Harpers celebrate Christmas 2039, with an 80-year-old Ben as grumpy as ever. **(R)**

BBC 2



Festive skits in Victoria Wood's Midlife Christmas, 8.00pm

6.10 FILM: The Road to El Dorado (2000) Animated adventure, with the voices of Kenneth Branagh and Kevin Kline. **★ ★ ★ 7.30 FILM: College Road Trip (2008)** Family comedy, starring Martin Lawrence. **★ 8.50 Queen of Tigers: Natural World Special** Colin Stafford-Johnson films the life of tiger Machli in India. **(R)** **9.50 Ten Pieces 10.40 60 Years of Carols from King's** The history of the annual Christmas service broadcast. **(R)** **11.40 FILM: On the Town (1949)** Musical, starring Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin. **★ ★ ★ 1.15 Gene Kelly: Talking Pictures** A profile of actor and dancer Gene Kelly. **(R)** **1.50 FILM: Singin' in the Rain (1952)** Musical comedy, starring Gene Kelly. **★ ★ ★**

ITV



Kermit the Frog features in A Christmas Cracker, shown at 8.00pm

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show! **(R)** **6.20 Pat & Stan (R)** **6.30 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures (R)** **6.40 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures (R)** **6.55 Sooty (R)** **7.05 Almost Naked Animals (R)** **7.20 Almost Naked Animals (R)** **7.35 Mr Bean: The Animated Series (R)** **7.50 Super 4 (R)** **8.10 Super 4 (R)** **8.25 Weekend at Christmas 9.25 Dinner Date: Australia (R)** **10.25 Celebrity Squares (R)** **11.25 Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs at Christmas (R)** **12.30 ITV News and Weather 12.45 The Chase: Christmas Special** With Steve Pemberton, Paula Lane, Ben Miller and Mr Burton. Last in the series. **(R)** **1.45 FILM: Back to the Future Part II (1989)** Sci-fi comedy sequel starring Michael J Fox. **★ ★ ★**

Ch4



Bear's Wild Weekend with Ben Stiller, shown at 8.00pm

7.25 The Bear Animation based on the Raymond Briggs tale. **(R)** **7.55 The Morning Line** Nick Luck and guests are at Kempton Park to preview today's races. **9.00 The Big Bang Theory** Leonard's mother visits. **(R)** **9.25 The Big Bang Theory** Leonard fails to get Sheldon into the Christmas mood. **(R)** **9.55 FILM: Inspector Gadget (1999)** Disney comedy adventure, starring Matthew Broderick. **★ 11.30 FILM: Horton Hears a Who! (2008)** An elephant discovers a city on a speck of dust and vows to protect it, but the other animals think he has gone mad. Animated comedy, with the voices of Jim Carrey and Steve Carell. **★ ★ ★ 1.15 Channel 4 Racing** Clare Balding and Nick Luck present live coverage.

Ch5



Tommy Cooper's Christmas Special, shown at 9.25pm

6.00 Milkshake! 9.55 Access Showbiz news and gossip. **10.05 FILM: Carry On Constable (1960)** A staff shortage forces a police inspector to take on four bumbling new recruits, who only increase the crime rate. Comedy, starring Sid James, Kenneth Williams and Kenneth Connor. Part of Best of British Comedy Day. **(b/w)** **★ ★ ★ 11.45 FILM: Carry On Teacher (1959)** A headmaster's hopes of landing a job at a better school are ruined by his naughty pupils, who do not want him to leave. Comedy, with Ted Ray, Kenneth Connor and Kenneth Williams. Part of Best of British Comedy Day. **(b/w)** **★ ★ ★ 1.30 FILM: Carry On Nurse (1959)** Comedy, starring Kenneth Williams and Hattie Jacques. **(b/w)** **★ ★ ★**

Early View

Prime Time

Prime Time

Late View

3.15 Monsters, Inc (2001) Two monsters try to get a little girl who has wandered into their world back home before anyone finds out. Pixar animated comedy, with the voices of John Goodman and Billy Crystal. **★ ★ ★**

4.40 The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists! (2012) Premiere. Animated comedy, with the voice of Hugh Grant. **★ ★ ★**

6.05 BBC News; Weather.

6.20 Midlands Today; Weather.

6.25 Still Open All Hours New series. David Jason returns as shopkeeper Granville, who is forced to take extra security precautions – causing him no end of discomfort. The next episode is on Sunday at 7.30pm.

6.55 The Boy in the Dress Family comedy based on David Walliams' children's book about a 12-year-old boy who shocks his family and friends when he starts cross-dressing.

8.00 EastEnders The fallout continues for the Carters as more lies are exposed, while Dot is heartbroken when Charlie hands Nick his ferry tickets and drives him away from Walford.

8.30 Avengers Assemble (2012) Premiere. Iron Man, Thor, Captain America and the Hulk unite to defend Earth from an alien invasion. Superhero adventure, with Robert Downey Jr, Chris Evans and Chris Hemsworth. **★ ★ ★**

10.40 BBC News

10.50 BBC Regional News and Weather; National Lottery Update

11.00 Match of the Day Highlights of the Boxing Day Premier League fixtures, which included Chelsea v West Ham United and Arsenal v Queens Park Rangers.

3.30 Victoria Wood: That Musical We Made The comedienne presents a behind-the-scenes look at the film That Day We Sang which she wrote and directed, as well as the events that inspired the story.

4.30 Final Score Jason Mohammad presents a round-up of this afternoon's results from the Premier League and Football League.

5.25 War Horse at the Proms The BBC Concert Orchestra is joined by Gareth Malone and the Military Wives for music and stories from the First World War, inspired by Michael Morpurgo's novel.

6.45 Christmas University Challenge Graduates of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and Balliol College, Oxford, compete. Doctor Who star Dan Starkey and Liberal Democrat MP Alan Beith are among the contestants.

7.15 The Two Ronnies: Christmas Show Vintage comedy from Messrs Barker and Corbett. **(R)**

8.00 Victoria Wood's Midlife Christmas A festive special from 2009 that attempts to cram a night's Christmas viewing into an hour. Highlights include the Midlife Olympics, and costume drama Lark Pies to Cranchesterford. **(R)**

9.00 That Day We Sang A children's choir reunites in 1969 after a 40-year interval, prompting two members to reflect on their lives. Victoria Wood's musical drama, with Imelda Staunton and Michael Ball.

10.30 Hunky Dory (2011) Premiere. A teacher at a 1970s Welsh school persuades her students to stage a musical based on Shakespeare's The Tempest. Drama, with Minnie Driver. **★ ★ ★**

12.15 FILM: The Winslow Boy (1999) Drama, with Nigel Hawthorne. **★ ★ ★ 1.55 This Is BBC Two**

3.45 Off Their Rockers Velma gets racy in a photo booth. **(R)**

4.15 Downton Abbey Lord Sinderby invites the Crawleys to a grouse-shooting party at Brancaster Castle, but the butler has an axe to grind and a scandalous secret threatens to derail the holiday. **(R)**

6.15 ITV News and Weather

6.30 Emmerdale Jai spots the man who sold him Archie and Megan wants to take action, knowing this is her only chance to find Rachel. Katie comes up with an idea to get Robert out of her life.

7.00 Coronation Street Hour-long episode. Gary has an unexpected encounter after trying to steal from the cafe till, and a drunk David makes a shock announcement in the Rovers.

8.00 A Christmas Cracker Bradley Walsh hosts a festive spectacular from the Hammersmith Apollo with a variety of guests, including Al Murray, Katherine Jenkins, the Muppets, the Vamps and Flawless.

9.00 Birds of a Feather New series. The hit sitcom begins its second series on ITV with a Christmas special. Dorien splashes out on a trip to the Canary Islands, taking Sharon and Tracey with her.

9.30 Through the Christmas Keyhole Keith Lemon noses around the homes of mystery celebrities and challenges the panel – Jonathan Ross, Louis Walsh and Kym Marsh – to work out their identities.

10.30 ITV News and Weather

10.45 Out of Sight (1998) A US Marshal pursues an escaped convict, but as the chase intensifies, so do their feelings for each other. Romantic crime drama, starring George Clooney. **★ ★ ★**

12.50 Jackpot247 3.00 The Jeremy Kyle Show **USA (R)** **3.45 ITV Nightscreen**

3.50 Turner & Hooch (1989) Family canine comedy, starring Tom Hanks. **★ ★ ★**

5.50 Channel 4 News Including sport and weather.

6.00 The Simpsons Four tales celebrating the festive season. Bart hatches a plan to hold Santa Claus hostage, and Katy Perry leads the family in a rendition of The 39 Days of Christmas.

6.30 Hollyoaks Sinead's life hangs in the balance, while Ste and John Paul's future looks uncertain, and Nancy is left with a difficult decision to make.

7.00 Marvel's Agents of SHIELD Coulson and Whitehall's forces meet in an explosive confrontation that dramatically alters the fate of everyone involved, while Skye discovers some shocking secrets about her past.

8.00 Bear's Wild Weekend with Ben Stiller Survivalist Bear Grylls is partnered with actor and director Ben Stiller for a 48-hour, action-filled trek into the wilds of Scotland that pushes them to the limit. **(R)**

9.00 The Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2014 Richard Ayoade, David Mitchell, Mel B, Micky Flanagan, Sarah Millican and Kevin Bridges battle it out to see who knows the most about the past 12 months. Jimmy Carr hosts.

11.00 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special Festive fun with guests Terry Wogan, Sarah Millican, Dan Stevens, Emma Willis and Gino D'Acampo. Last in the series. **(R)**

1.05 FILM: Legend (1985) Fantasy adventure, with Tom Cruise. **★ ★ ★ 2.45 FILM: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)** Western, starring Paul Newman. **★ ★ ★ 4.35 Small Animal Hospital (R)** **5.00 Small Animal Hospital (R)** **5.25 FILM: Flicka 2 (2010)** Premiere. Family drama, starring Tammin Sursok. **★ ★ ★**

3.15 The Ladykillers (1955) Ealing black comedy, starring Alec Guinness. **★ ★ ★ ★**

5.00 A Shot in the Dark (1964) Comedy, starring Peter Sellers. **★ ★ ★**

7.05 Rob Brydon Live A stand-up show recorded at Norwich's Theatre Royal during the comedian and actor's first UK tour in 2009, featuring comic tales, impressions, songs and anecdotes. Part of Best of British Comedy Day. **(R)**

8.00 Morecambe & Wise Live! 1973 The duo's performance at the Ashcroft Theatre in Croydon's Fairfield Halls in October 1973, which was the only one of their stage shows captured on film. Part of Best of British Comedy Day. **(R)**

9.25 Tommy Cooper's Christmas Special Festive edition of the comic magician's show from 1974, featuring music by Dana and Vic Damone and a guest appearance by French puppeteer Andre Tahon. Part of Best of British Comedy Day. **(R)**

10.25 Carry On Christmas The gang's first TV special, originally broadcast in 1969, which consists of sketches based on A Christmas Carol. With Sid James, Barbara Windsor and Frankie Howerd. Part of Best of British Comedy Day. **(R)**

11.30 Greatest Ever Carry On Films A rundown of the most memorable moments from the classic comedy film series, including flying bikinis, suggestive laughs and infamous catchphrases. Part of Best of British Comedy Day. **(R)**

12.35 FILM: Carry On Spying (1964) Comedy, starring Kenneth Williams. **(b/w)** **★ ★ ★ 2.20 SuperCasino 3.10 Britain's Craziest Christmas Lights (R)** **4.00 Great Scientists (R)** **4.25 House Doctor (R)** **4.45 House Doctor (R)** **5.10 House Doctor (R)** **5.35 Wildlife SOS (R)**

New Year's Eve

BBC 1



Queen + Adam Lambert
Rock Big Ben Live, shown at 11.15pm

6.00 Breakfast Round-up of national and international news, plus the latest from the money markets. **9.00 FILM: The Cat in the Hat (2003)** Comedy fantasy, starring Mike Myers. ★★ **10.15 FILM: Eight Below (2006)** A blizzard forces an Antarctic guide to abandon his huskies, which must now rely on their pack instinct to survive. Disney adventure, starring Paul Walker and Bruce Greenwood. ★★ **12.05 Bargain Hunt (R)** **12.50 BBC News 1.00 BBC Regional News: Weather. 1.10 FILM: Ratatouille (2007)** Pixar animated comedy, with the voice of Patton Oswalt. ★★ **2.50 FILM: Monsters vs Aliens (2009)** Animated sci-fi comedy, with the voice of Reese Witherspoon. ★★

BBC 2



Mock the Week New Year's Eve Special, shown at 10.50pm

6.10 Sign Zone: Secrets of the Castle with Ruth, Peter and Tom The team explores the construction of a castle's defences. (R) **7.10 Natural World: Empire of the Desert Ants (R)** **8.10 FILM: Saboteur (1942)** Alfred Hitchcock's thriller, starring Robert Cummings. (b/w) ★★ **9.55 Alfred Hitchcock: Talking Pictures (R)** **10.35 FILM: Shadow of a Doubt (1943)** Alfred Hitchcock's thriller, starring Joseph Cotten. (b/w) ★★ **12.20 The Hairy Bikers' Asian Adventure** Dave Myers and Si King are entertained by a geisha in Kyoto. (R) **1.20 FILM: Becoming Jane (2006)** Romantic period drama, starring Anne Hathaway and James McAvoy. ★★

ITV



Tommy Cooper: Not Like That, Like This, shown at 10.00pm

6.00 Dinner Date Joel from Manchester picks three blind dates. (R) **7.00 Good Morning Britain** Sir David Attenborough chats to Kate Garraway about his new documentary series: Conquest of the Skies. **8.30 Lorraine** Entertainment and fashion news. **9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show** Guests air their differences. (R) **10.30 Judge Rinder** Real-life cases in a studio courtroom. (R) **11.30 Who's Doing the Dishes?** Footballer Wes Brown plays host. (R) **12.25 All Star Family Fortunes** With Rav Wilding and Blythe Duff. (R) **1.10 ITV News and Weather** **1.20 Secret Dealers** Items include a "grotesque" fish vase and a diamond cluster ring. (R) **2.20 The Queen's Garden (R)**

Ch4



The success of Disney's film, Frozen at Christmas, on at 8.00pm

6.20 How I Met Your Mother (R) **6.40 How I Met Your Mother** Brinley Spears guest stars. (R) **7.05 Everybody Loves Raymond (R)** **7.30 FILM: The Valley of Gwangi (1969)** Fantasy Western, starring James Franciscus. ★★ **9.20 FILM: The Brady Bunch Movie (1995)** Comedy based on the 1970s sitcom, starring Shelley Long. ★★ **11.00 The Big Bang Theory (R)** **11.25 The Simpsons** Bart is knocked down by Mr Burns' car. (R) **11.55 The Simpsons** Homer fears he has only 24 hours to live. (R) **12.25 FILM: Five Children and It (2004)** Children's fantasy, with Kenneth Branagh. ★★ **2.15 FILM: Home Alone 3 (1997)** Comedy sequel, starring Alex D Linz. ★★

Ch5



The success of the Swedish group, The Abba Years, 12.00am

6.00 Milkshake! 10.10 World's Strongest Man 2014 Action from the fourth and penultimate heat at the Commerce Casino in Los Angeles, which featured three-time champion Zydrunas Savickas. (R) **11.10 FILM: Carry On Regardless (1961)** Seven bungling handymen have to prove they can hold down a job when their landlord tries to evict them. Slapstick comedy, starring Sid James, Charles Hawtrey and Kenneth Williams. (b/w) ★★ **1.00 FILM: The Vikings (1958)** A Norse warrior fights to claim the Northumbrian throne, unaware his rival for the crown is really his half-brother. Adventure, with Kirk Douglas, Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh. ★★

Early View

Prime Time

Late View

4.15 Top of the Pops New Year's Eve Fearnie Cotton and Reggie Yates review the year in music.

5.20 Pointless Celebrities A star-studded version of the unorthodox general knowledge quiz. (R)

6.05 BBC News

6.20 Midlands Today; Weather.

6.35 Celebrity Mastermind Steve Pemberton, Harry Shearer, Kate Thornton and Tony Law answer questions on subjects including the Coen brothers' films, George Michael and Second World War fighter aircraft.

7.05 Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull (2008) The globe-trotting archaeologist races against Soviet agents to find a mysterious artefact of untold power. Action adventure sequel, starring Harrison Ford and Cate Blanchett. ★★

9.00 Mapp and Lucia Miss Lucia introduces a series of musical evenings, although Mapp notices the locals are tiring of her bossy ways and is keen to encourage a revolt. Last in the series.

10.00 BBC News; Weather; National Lottery Update

10.15 The Graham Norton Show Graham invites another line-up of A-list guests to huddle up on the sofa and help him welcome in the new year.

11.15 Queen + Adam Lambert Rock Big Ben Live Brian May and Roger Taylor join forces with Adam Lambert at the Central Hall in London's Westminster, bringing in the new year with a concert of Queen's greatest hits.

11.55 New Year's Eve Fireworks

12.10 Queen + Adam Lambert Rock Big Ben Live 12.30 Mrs Brown's Boys New Year Special (R) **1.10 John Bishop Live: Elvis Has Left the Building (R)** **2.20 FILM: Old School (2003)** ★★ **3.50 Weather for the Week Ahead** **3.55 BBC News**

3.10 Coast Australia (R) **4.00 Big Dreams Small Spaces** Horticulturalist Monty Don helps amateur gardeners on the south coast of England and in Snowdonia who are battling the elements as they attempt to create idyllic outdoor spaces. (R)

5.00 Wild Brazil The animals look for breeding partners. Last in the series. (R)

6.00 Flog It! Catherine Southon and Mark Stacey locate interesting items at St Petroc's Church in Bodmin, Cornwall. (R)

7.00 Tigers About the House - What Happened Next First of a two-part programme catching up with zookeeper Giles Clark and the Sumatran tiger cubs he was hand-rearing in his home in the suburbs of Queensland.

8.00 Christmas University Challenge Two teams of distinguished graduates compete on behalf of their former universities in the first semi-final of the academic quiz's festive series. Jeremy Paxman hosts.

8.30 The Help (2011) Premiere. An aspiring journalist in 1960s Mississippi creates controversy by giving black servants the chance to tell their stories. Drama, starring Emma Stone and Viola Davis. ★★

10.50 Mock the Week New Year's Eve Special A selection of out-takes, quizzes and favourite clips. Last in the series.

11.20 Jools' Annual Hootenanny 2014 With Ronnie Spector, Ed Sheeran, Bob Scaggs, Paolo Nutini, Ellie Goulding, William Bell, Paloma Faith, Wilko Johnson, Joss Stone, Clean Bandit with Jess Glynne and Hayseed Dixie.

1.35 Glastonbury 2014 Highlights A selection of performances from the festival at Worthy Farm in Somerset. **3.40 This Is BBC Two**

3.25 Goldfinger (1964) James Bond adventure, starring Sean Connery. ★★

5.35 The Chase Quiz show, hosted by Bradley Walsh. (R)

6.30 ITV News Central; Weather.

6.45 ITV News and Weather **7.00 Emmerdale** Samson finds one of Belle's pills and tells Zak and Lisa, Jimmy worries about Nicola when she heads straight back to work and Robert feels torn between Chrissie and Aaron.

7.30 Coronation Street Liz tells Steve he can borrow from the Rovers' account to pay his staff, David lets Michael move into No 8 after he is evicted and Gary apologises to Roy for breaking into the cafe.

8.00 Rita & Me Fifty years after Barbara Knox's first appearance on Coronation Street, this programme looks back on her character Rita's greatest moments on the cobbles.

9.00 A Funny Old Year 2014 Jason Manford presents this end-of-year comedy review show - a humorous celebration of the highs and lows of the past 12 months, from the brilliant to the infuriating.

10.00 Tommy Cooper: Not Like That, Like This Biopic of the hugely popular comedian, who was in love with two women and unable to choose between them. Starring David Threlfall (Shameless), with Amanda Redman and Helen McCrory. (R)

11.55 ITV News and Weather and New Year's Bongs The headlines, followed by Big Ben.

12.10 FILM: Carry On Camping (1969) Two men hatch a plan to lure their unsuspecting girlfriends to a nudist camp and introduce them to a life of wild abandon. Bawdy comedy, starring Sid James. ★★ **1.40 The Jeremy Kyle Show** **1.25 ITV News** **1.50 The Jeremy Kyle Show (R)**

4.20 Fantastic Mr Fox (2009) Stop-motion animated adventure, with the voice of George Clooney. ★★

6.00 The Simpsons Lisa tries to make amends for cheating in an exam, but the school authorities turn a deaf ear to her confession that she bought the answers from Nelson. (R)

6.30 Hollyoaks Hour-long episode. A desperate Nancy puts herself in danger, while Joe decides he must find out the truth about Freddie, and Robbie stands up to his dad.

7.30 Channel 4 News Including sport and weather.

8.00 Frozen at Christmas The makers of Disney's Frozen, the most successful animated film of all time, talk about its creation and production, and the writing and performance of its most popular songs. (R)

9.00 Alan Carr's New Year Spectacular The comedian is joined by Jonathan Ross, Gok Wan, Alesha Dixon, Mark Wright, James Corden, Caroline Flack and Seann Walsh, with music by Tulisa Contostavlos and Professor Green.

11.05 50 Funniest Moments 2014 Famous faces help count down the year's top 50 hilarious incidents across the worlds of TV, music, sport, politics and the internet - most of them unintentional. (R)

12.40 C4's 30 Greatest Comedy Shows Celebrating some of the station's most impressive comedy series, exploring the impact shows including Father Ted, Spaced and The Inbetweeners have had on British TV. (R) **2.30 The IT Crowd** Moss and Roy display curious symptoms. (R) **2.55 The IT Crowd** Jen deals with a difficult builder. (R) **3.20 The IT Crowd** Roy and Moss revel in their masculinity. (R) **3.50 Phil Spencer: Secret Agent (R)** **4.45 Kirstie's Handmade Treasures (R)** **4.55 Secret Eaters (R)** **5.10 How I Met Your Mother (R)**

3.10 The Dirty Dozen (1967) Second World War action adventure, with Lee Marvin. ★★

6.05 Tommy Cooper's Christmas Special Festive edition of the comic magician's show from 1974, featuring music by Dana and Vic Damone and a guest appearance by French puppeteer Andre Tahon. (R)

7.00 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away High Court enforcement officers Paul Bohill and Steve and Ben Pinner face their biggest eviction yet, as they take on squatters in a large central London office block; (R) **5 News Update**

8.00 World's Strongest Man 2014 Action from the fifth and final heat at the Commerce Casino in Los Angeles, which featured defending champion Brian Shaw and Britain's Graham Hicks; **5 News at 9**

9.00 Britain's Favourite Sitcoms Mel Giedroyc narrates a countdown of the nation's 50 best-loved TV comedies, as voted for by Channel 5 viewers in an online poll.

12.00 The Abba Years The success of the Swedish group, exploring the flamboyant outfits, hit records, successful spin-offs, marriages and break-ups. Featuring interviews with the band members. (R) **1.00 SuperCasino** Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.10 World's Strongest Man 2014** Action from the fourth and penultimate heat at the Commerce Casino in Los Angeles, which featured three-time champion Zydrunas Savickas. (R) **4.00 Great Scientists** The life and legacy of Charles Darwin, one of the most controversial scientists of all time, whose theory of evolution caused a storm in Victorian society. (R) **4.25 Chinese Food in Minutes** Steamed wine sea bass and a spicy beef dish. (R) **4.30 Chinese Food in Minutes** Ching-He Huang teaches two rugby players to prepare oriental dishes. (R) **4.45 House Doctor (R)** **5.10 House Doctor (R)** **5.35 Wildlife SOS (R)**



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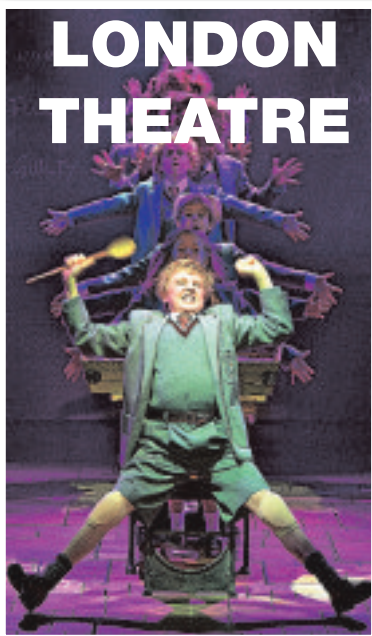
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Please read brochure/web page for full information plus terms and conditions

Early View

Prime Time

Late View

BBC 1



Gary Lineker presents Match of the Day, shown at 10.35pm

6.00 Breakfast Round-up of national and international news, plus the latest from the money markets. **9.00 FILM: Bee Movie (2007)** Animated comedy, with the voice of Jerry Seinfeld. **★★★ 10.25 FILM: Over the Hedge (2006)** Animated comedy, with the voice of Bruce Willis. **★★★★ 11.40 Life Story: The Full Circle** Highlights of the natural history series. **12.45 The Archbishop of Canterbury's New Year Message** By the Most Rev Justin Welby. **12.50 BBC News 1.00 BBC Regional News; Weather. 1.10 The Boy in the Dress** David Walliams' story about a youngster who wants to be different. **(R) 2.10 FILM: Mary Poppins (1964)** Disney musical fantasy, with Julie Andrews. **★★★★**

BBC 2



Jeremy Paxman hosts Christmas University Challenge, 8.30pm

6.15 Sign Zone: The Great Interior Design Challenge (R) 7.15 Sign Zone: Close Calls: On Camera (R) 7.45 Alec Guinness: Talking Pictures (R) 8.30 FILM: The Lavender Hill Mob (1951) (b/w) ★★★★★ 9.50 FILM: A Hard Day's Night (1964) (b/w) ★★★★★ 11.15 New Year's Day Concert Live from Vienna Coverage of the Vienna Philharmonic's traditional New Year's Day concert. **12.50 Snow Wolf Family and Me Part one of two.** Gordon Buchanan explores the lives and habits of Arctic wolves. **(R) 1.50 Snow Wolf Family and Me Part two of two.** Gordon Buchanan follows the wolves as they hunt. **(R) 2.50 FILM: Galaxy Quest (1999)** Sci-fi comedy, starring Tim Allen. **★★★**

ITV



New You've Been Framed! At Christmas, shown at 7.00pm

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) 6.20 Pat & Stan (R) 6.30 Dino Dan (R) 6.55 Dino Dan (R) 7.00 Animals (R) 7.10 Sooty (R) 7.25 A Grizzly New Year's Tale (R) 7.55 Super 4 (R) 8.10 Super 4 (R) 8.25 Dinner Date Lucy from Surrey hopes to find love. (R) 9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show 10.20 Judge Rinder Real-life cases in a studio courtroom. (R) 11.20 Who's Doing the Dishes? Tricia Penrose plays host. (R) 12.25 All Star Family Fortunes With Nadia Sawalha and Jane Cox. (R) 1.25 ITV News and Weather 1.35 Secret Dealers The dealers bid on a Victorian silver-mounted scent bottle. **2.35 You've Been Framed! Comedy clips, including a cat that refuses to be put down. (R)**

Ch4



Alex Zane presents Rude Tube Welcome to 2015, shown at 10.30pm

6.15 FILM: The Three Worlds of Gulliver (1960) Fantasy adventure, starring Kerwin Mathews. **★★★ 7.55 FILM: The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958)** The wily sailor pits his wits against an evil magician to save a princess on an island inhabited by hideous monsters. Fantasy adventure, starring Kerwin Mathews and Kathryn Grant. **★★★ 9.45 The Big Bang Theory** Penny arranges a date for Raj. (R) **10.10 The Big Bang Theory** Sheldon's old adversary Wil Wheaton returns. (R) **10.40 The Simpsons** Marge recalls how she met Homer. (R) **11.10 FILM: The Last Mimzy (2007)** Children's fantasy, starring Chris O'Neil. **★★★★ 1.00 Channel 4 Racing** Nick Luck presents live coverage of six races.

Ch5



Andy and Maggie Robin feature, Hercules the Human Bear, 7.30pm

6.00 Milkshake! 9.45 Access Showbiz news and gossip. (R) **10.00 World's Strongest Man 2014** Action from the fifth and final heat at the Commerce Casino in Los Angeles, which featured defending champion Brian Shaw and Britain's Graham Hicks. (R) **11.00 FILM: The Dam Busters (1954)** An engineer designs an ingenious bouncing bomb to destroy major dams in Germany's industrial heartland. Fact-based Second World War drama, with Michael Redgrave. (b/w) **★★★★ 1.25 FILM: The Italian Job (1969)** A crook recruits a gang to steal \$4million in gold bullion and make a quick getaway from central Turin in a fleet of Minis. Crime comedy, starring Michael Caine. **★★★★**

4.25 The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn (2011)

Premiere. A reporter goes on a globetrotting quest to find a sunken ship containing a pirate's lost treasure. Animated adventure, with the voices of Jamie Bell and Andy Serkis. **★★★**

6.05 BBC News

6.20 Midlands Today;

6.30 Roald Dahl's Esio Trot Dustin Hoffman and Judi Dench star in this adaptation of Roald Dahl's story about retired bachelor Mr Hoppy, who hits upon a cunning plan to romance his neighbour Mrs Silver.

8.00 Miranda The very last episode of the hit sitcom sees the shopkeeper making one final attempt to accept herself and find contentment. Miranda Hart stars, with Patricia Hodge and Tom Ellis.

8.30 EastEnders Hour-long episode. After the drama of Christmas, the good folk of Walford turn their attention to the new year – and things get off to an explosive start.

9.35 Mrs Brown's Boys The second of two festive episodes. Agnes increases her home security after a spate of local burglaries, while Cathy is feeling broody, giving lovelorn Buster Brady an idea.

10.10 BBC News

10.25 BBC Regional News;

10.35 Match of the Day Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Tottenham Hotspur v Chelsea at White Hart Lane and Southampton v Arsenal at St Mary's Stadium.

12.10 Tony Bennett & Lady Gaga: Cheek to Cheek Live! The unlikely music duo take to the stage in New York. (R) **1.05 FILM: Road Trip (2000)** Comedy, starring Breckin Meyer, Tom Green and Seann William Scott. **★★ 2.35 Skiing**

Weatherview 2.40 BBC News

4.25 The Archbishop of Canterbury's New Year Message By the Most Rev Justin Welby. (R)

4.30 Final Score A round-up of this afternoon's football results.

5.30 Force 10 from Navarone (1978) A commando mission to destroy a bridge in the Balkans that is vital to the Nazis is jeopardised by a traitor. Second World War adventure sequel, with Harrison Ford and Robert Shaw. **★★**

7.30 Tigers About the House – What Happened Next Part two of two. The Clarks see the harsh reality of tiger poaching in Indonesia, while Spot faces an operation that may end with him losing all vision.

8.30 Christmas University Challenge Two teams of distinguished graduates compete on behalf of their former universities in the second semi-final of the festive edition of the academic quiz. Jeremy Paxman hosts.

9.00 Quartet (2012) Premiere. Three former opera singers' plans for a fundraising concert for their retirement home are disrupted by a new arrival. Comedy drama, with Maggie Smith and Billy Connolly. **★★★★**

10.30 Julie Walters: A Life on Screen The actress chats about her career, from her beginnings in theatre through to her successes in TV and film. With contributions by Victoria Wood, Celia Imrie and Hugh Bonneville. (R)

11.30 Mock the Week New Year's Eve Special Dara O Briain presents a selection of out-takes, quizzes and favourite clips. Last in the series. (R)

12.05 FILM: Frenzy (1972) Thriller, starring John Finch. **★★★★ 1.55 FILM: Stick It (2006)** Comedy, starring Missy Peregrym. **★★★★ 3.35 This Is BBC Two**

3.05 Thunderball (1965)

James Bond sets out to foil a plot by crime syndicate Spectre to detonate two nuclear warheads off the US coast. Spy adventure, with Sean Connery, Claudine Auger and Adolfo Celi. **★★★**

5.45 Rita & Me Barbara Knox looks back on her 50-year career on Coronation Street. (R)

6.45 ITV News and Weather

7.00 New You've Been Framed! At Christmas Harry Hill narrates a festive selection of comedy clips, featuring a photo-bombing reindeer, an explosive chimney and a squirrel wrecking his neighbour's Christmas lights. (R)

7.30 Emmerdale Hour-long episode. Belle persuades Lachlan to try one of the pills, but he struggles with the effects and takes a turn for the worse. Harriet tells Finn she has news about his mum.

8.30 Birds of a Feather Sharon amazes the others with her high IQ, and Dorien, under pressure to find a heroine for her next book, decides to push her toward a surprising new career.

9.00 The Dark Knight (2008) Premiere. Batman is pushed to breaking point as criminal mastermind the Joker plunges Gotham City into chaos. Comic-book thriller sequel, with Christian Bale and Heath Ledger. **★★★★**

11.55 ITV News and Weather

12.00 The Cube A Londoner hopes to win enough money to take his family to Australia, while a police officer from the West Midlands thinks she is tough enough to walk away with the jackpot. (R) **12.50 Jackpot247** Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.00 The Jeremy Kyle Show** USA (R) **3.40 ITV News** (R) **5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show** (R)

3.30 Guy Martin's Passion for Life

Documentary following the life of the motorcycle racer and lorry mechanic. (R)

4.00 Channel 4 News Including sport and weather.

4.10 The Wizard of Oz (1939) A tornado whisks a girl off to a magical land where she embarks on a journey in search of the wizard who knows the way home. Musical fantasy, with Judy Garland and Ray Bolger. **★★★★**

6.10 Sister Act (1992) A nightclub singer is sent to live in a convent for her own protection after agreeing to testify against a brutal gangster. Comedy, starring Whoopi Goldberg and Harvey Keitel. Edited for language. **★★★**

8.00 Snow White & the Huntsman (2012) Premiere. A princess joins forces with the warrior sent to kill her to overthrow an evil queen. Fantasy adventure, starring Kristen Stewart, Chris Hemsworth and Charlize Theron. Edited for violence. **★★★**

10.30 Rude Tube Welcome to 2015 Alex Zane explores the 100 most popular internet videos of the past 12 months in a two-hour special, featuring the spider-dog prank.

12.35 FILM: The Godfather (1972) A crime boss entrusts control of his business to his three sons after an attempt is made on his life. Francis Ford Coppola's gangster drama, starring Marlon Brando. **★★★★**

3.30 Trans World Sport Including a profile of wheelchair rugby in Australia, the Carolina Duke US college basketball rivalry and an interview with Goran Ivanisevic.

4.30 Phil Spencer: Secret Agent The property expert helps a couple on the Wirral whose five-bedroom semi looks like a student residence. (R) **5.25 Hugh's 3 Good Things: Best Bites (R) 5.40 Small Animal Hospital (R)**

3.30 Ben-Hur (1959) A Jewish prince is betrayed by his Roman friend and sold into slavery, but returns years later to seek revenge. Oscar-winning epic, starring Charlton Heston and Stephen Boyd. **★★★★**

7.30 Hercules the Human Bear The story of Andy and Maggie Robin's 25-year relationship with a grizzly bear they bought as a cub from an Aviemore zoo, and which went on to become a star of TV and films. (R)

8.30 World's Strongest Man 2014 Action from the Grand Final at the Commerce Casino in Los Angeles, which featured the 12 qualifiers from the five heats. Last in the series. **5 News Update**

9.35 White Dee: What's All the Fuss About? Dee Kelly reveals how appearing on Benefits Street changed her life, leading to new-found fame and featuring public appearances, photoshoots, newspaper interviews and politics.

10.35 Celeb Big Brother: The Good, the Bad and the Unforgettable Emma Willis narrates a selection of memorable moments from the reality show, including George Galloway pretending to be a cat and Lionel Blair dressed in bondage gear.

12.35 Jim Davidson: At Least I'm Not Boring The comedian gives an insight into the highs and lows of his colourful personal and professional life, from hosting The Generation Game to appearing in Celebrity Big Brother. (R) **1.35 SuperCasino** Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **4.00 Wildlife SOS** The work of volunteers at an animal sanctuary. (R) **4.20 Wildlife SOS** The work of volunteers at an animal sanctuary. (R) **4.45 House Doctor** Ann Maurice helps a couple sell their three-bedroom detached house. (R) **5.10 House Doctor (R) 5.35 Wildlife SOS (R)**

star extra TRAVEL

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Two days departing May 17 and Sept 20



PRICE FROM **£169**

- Return coach travel
- Overnight bed and breakfast accommodation
- Entrance to the Tower of London including the Crown Jewels exhibition
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Four days departing May 21



PRICE FROM **£299**

- Return coach travel
- Three nights half-board accommodation
- Afternoon Tea in the Terrace Pavilion at the House of Commons overlooking the Thames
- Guided tour of the Houses of Parliament
- Visit to St Albans
- Visits to Kenwood House, Kensington Palace, and the Royal Air Force Museum London
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Welsh Association of Male Voice Choirs at the Royal Albert Hall

Two days departing May 9



PRICE FROM **£129**

- Return coach travel
- Overnight bed and breakfast accommodation in an outer London hotel
- Circle seat for the concert (upgrades offered)
- Sightseeing tour of London
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- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Newmarket Promotions (ABTA V787X)

Butterflies and Orchids

Two days departing March 6



PRICE FROM **£125**

- Return coach travel
- Overnight bed and breakfast accommodation
- Visit to the Royal Botanical Kew Gardens
- Visit to RHS Wisley gardens
- Services of a tour manager
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Organised by Newmarket Promotions (ABTA V787X)

Lindisfarne and the Alnwick Garden

Three days departing Jun 12 and Sept 18



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- Return coach travel
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- Tour of Northumbria's Heritage Coastline and visit to Lindisfarne
- Entrance to The Alnwick Garden
- Visit to Durham
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Newmarket Promotions (ABTA V787X)

Norfolk Gardens and the Lavender Harvest

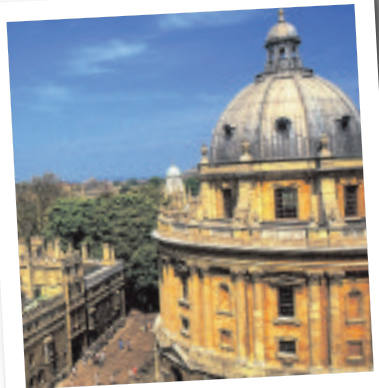
Three days departing July 3



PRICE FROM **£219**

- Return coach travel
- Two nights half-board accommodation
- Norfolk Lavender Caley Mill grounds tour
- Visit the Lavender Oil Distillery
- Cream tea and lavender scones
- Visit to Cambridge
- Entrance to Sandringham house and gardens
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- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)



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Four days departing April 10



PRICE FROM **£219**

- Return coach travel
- Three nights half-board accommodation
- Visits to Scarborough, Whitby, York and Harrogate
- Optional North Yorkshire Moors Railway excursion
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Portsmouth from Sea to Sky

Three days departing April 25



PRICE FROM **£209**

- Return coach travel
- Two nights half-board accommodation
- Full day at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard
- Portsmouth Harbour Cruise
- Ride to the top of Spinnaker Tower
- Entrance to the Submarine Museum
- Visit to Winchester
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Bletchley Park The Secrets of War

Two days departing May 23 and October 3



PRICE FROM **£119**

- Return coach travel
- Overnight half-board accommodation
- Visit to Bletchley Park
- Visit to Oxford
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Newmarket Promotions (ABTA V787X)

Call the Midwife

Two days departing May 16, Jul 25, Oct 3



PRICE FROM **£125**

- Return coach travel
- Overnight bed and breakfast accommodation
- Visit with entrance to London's Dockyard in Chatham, including a 90-minute guided Call the Midwife tour
- Visit to Canterbury
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Newmarket Promotions (ABTA V787X)

Emmerdale Country and the Best of Yorkshire

Three days departing May 1, Jun 19, Sep 25



PRICE FROM **£159**

- Return coach travel
- Two nights half-board accommodation
- Tours of Emmerdale and the Yorkshire Dales
- Short tour of Last of the Summer Wine country and visit to Holmfirth
- Visit to York
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

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Audi looking to the future

By Graham Breeze

Audi sees plug-in hybrids as the future and has revealed the A3 e-tron Sportback – an exciting glimpse into the future.

The award-winning third generation A3 has been redesigned as a highly efficient, five-seat plug-in hybrid electric vehicle suitable for everyday use and represents the company's first move into the sector.

And the launch really is a glimpse into Audi's future because this may be the company's first production car to use plug-in technology but you can soon expect to see the technology move into A6 and even Q7 in the near future.

It's a huge statement from the company you would normally associate with high powered, luxury transport – but the new arrival offers very few compromises.

The car on test was an A3 Sportback with a 1.4 turbocharged engine which developed 148bhp. The clever bit comes with the addition of a 101bhp electric motor integrated into the six-speed dual-clutch gearbox, providing a combined 350Nm of torque – that's VW Golf territory.

The man in the street needs to know what all that does to his performance figures and he isn't going to be disappointed. You can expect 0-62mph in a very impressive 7.6 seconds and a top speed of 138mph.

He also wants to know what his running costs are going to be and that's where both private and fleet buyers are going to



'In electric mode those emissions disappear completely. You can expect to average over 60mpg'

sit up and take notice. Using the technology carefully will get 176mpg while producing only 37g/km of emissions.

In electric mode those emissions disappear completely. You can expect to average over 60mpg.

A button on the A3's centre console allows selection of pure EV or hybrid-running modes, and there's also a 'charge save' setting which leaves the battery alone in anticipation of urban running later in your journey. A fourth mode utilises the 1.4 engine as a battery-charging alternator.

It all sounds a bit complex but the easy way is to just get in and drive. In a few hours I was confidently switching modes to get the best performance from the A3.

If you really need to find out how good this car is simply compare it with the A3 Sportback 2.0TDI S Tronic. There's 36 per cent more power and three per cent more torque. CO2 levels are down by 68 per cent, while there's 175 per cent more miles per gallon.

Top speed is up by 3mph and 0-62mph drops by less than a second. And don't forget there's no car tax to pay and only five per cent BIK.

Sensors

Significant additional e-tron equipment includes all weather LED headlights, 17in alloys, light and rain sensors, MMI Navigation Plus with Audi Connect, advanced key technology, rear parking sensors, rear roof spoiler and a charging cable kit.

There's also a smartphone-accessible e-tron app available providing remote control. That means you can pre-programme departure times to ensure a full battery; pre-programme climate control and remotely monitor charge status.

There's a price to pay for all this technology though and the test model would set you back close to £35,000, rising to nearer £40,000 with additions such as a panoramic sunroof and heated seats. That is a lot of money.

History tells us though that Audi don't get things wrong too often so this little glimpse into the future is one well worth remembering and keep an keen eye out for future developments.

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Moving forward together

Have you ever wondered what 'plant hire' actually means? Well it can mean the leasing of immense machines which handle the largest of engineering projects.

Titan Plant Hire in Bilston is a part of the Gill Group of companies. It specialises in supplying logistical support for all of the group, especially the large-scale projects carried out by the Gill Civil Engineering arm. This includes laying vast areas of concrete at airports and marine ports around the country. And transporting staff to and from project destinations.



Mark Woodward manages Titan Plant Hire and he has a busy schedule supporting the needs of such a large and diverse company. He explains the range of support provided: "We have a trouble-shooting and rapid response role within the Gill Group. Our main focus is to supply Gill Civil Engineering with plant, but that brings with it the need for maintenance schedules, operator's licences, tachograph recordings and other related regulatory activities to keep the business working."

"The range of jobs is immense and we operate across the UK."

Positive

"We have a fleet of trucks fitted with cranes and many personnel carriers to transport our staff, and these come from Greenhouse Commercials in Willenhall with who we have a long and positive relationship."

"Greenhouse DAF has supplied Titan with two 18T, one 12T and two 26T trucks fitted with new remote Hiab cranes which will make our loading and unloading operations faster and more efficient, and with new engine technology which produces lower emissions and better fuel economy of up to 20 per cent, we will reduce our company's carbon footprint."

Titan has a further two 26T and two 18T trucks on order for delivery this month. The order book for new work is very healthy, showing the signs of economic recovery are certainly tangible in terms of infrastructure construction.

Mark reflects on what he is looking for in the vehicles he purchases from Greenhouse. "We need robust, reliable vehicles with a very good fuel economy and we get this with our fleet of DAF and Vauxhall vehicles. With the new fleet we will maximise



'We need robust, reliable vehicles with a very good fuel economy'

ise the efficiency of our deliveries, but also improve the safety for pedestrians and our staff. The high level of customer service we get from the staff at Greenhouse DAF is a major reason why we deal with the company"

Titan employs a lot of staff on projects and so it needs pick-ups, minibuses and vans to transport staff and tools around the country.

Its fleet is continually refreshed and it

has around 20 Vauxhall vehicles at present provided through Greenhouse Vauxhall Commercial in Willenhall.

Any logistical operator requires the best quality of service as well as excellent vehicles fit for purpose, hard-wearing, easily maintained and low on maintenance costs.

Titan Plant Hire Ltd has established a strong, trusting relationship with Greenhouse Commercials laying the foundations for a strong and long-lasting partnership.

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Official fuel consumption in mpg (litres/100km) for the ŠKODA range: Urban 21.7 (13.0) to 74.3 (3.8), Extra Urban 40.4 (7.0) to 94.2 (3.0), Combined 30.4 (9.3) to 88.3 (3.2). CO₂ emissions for the ŠKODA range 217 to 85g/km. Standard EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.

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CALL PETE - MAN WITH A VAN. Removals, clearances. Items large or small. Call: 01902 741546 or 07899 635852.
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Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:
 1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
 2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
 3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

PEDIGREE CHIHUAHUA Black Boy Puppy. Ready now. Telephone 07952 926466.

POODLE. Toy, female, slightly older, very loving, fully immunised. Genuine reason. 07801 659239.

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vets

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5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering any obligations.

commercial premises sale / let

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6 Property

accommodation to let

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NOTICE TO READERS It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

BRIERLY HILL 2-bed house, newly decorated, suit working or retired, £500pcm. 07585 429131.

HEDNESFORD Pye Green, 3 bed GCH semi, clean and tidy, £115pw. Telephone 07768 040127.

ONE AND THREE bed flats, Tipton, Des considered. 07906 878175. 07961 301577.

ONE BED FLAT and bedsit, Tipton. DSS considered. 07961 301577 or 07906 878175.

SELF CONTAINED furnished studio rooms, Coseley area, over 30's, no DSS. Call 07866 580164.

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7 Jobs

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PLUMBER / GAS ENGINEER required for established company. Min 3 years experience. Variety of work including boiler installation / diagnosis/repair, bathroom installation, maintenance & all aspects of plumbing. Element of work is nationwide & involves nights over with expenses paid. Van and phone supplied. good rates. 01922 454687 or 07941 88362/3

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full time - general

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part time - general



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8 Motoring

cars over £1500

AUDI A4 2.0 QUATTRO. 2005, 118k, awd, met blue, MOT Sept, lat, alloys, abs, pas, alarm, full airbags. £3,300 ono. 07776 147108.

FIAT PANDA ELEGANZA 1.2

Petrol, 04, 5-drs, blue, ABS, air bag, electric mirrors and windows, air con, FSH, alarm, New MoT, metallic paint, central locking, PAS, Alloys, CD, one owner, Superb.

£1,350.
 Telephone 07724 629285.

FORD FOCUS 1.6, 2004, MoT'd, dark blue with leather trim. 56k. 0121 502 1279.

HONDA ACCORD TOURER 2004, Estate, 141,000 miles, leather, metallic, MoT, abs, electric windows, electric mirrors, air con, stereo CD, alarm, towbar. £1,600 ono. 07463 580858.

HONDA CRV

2008, 187,000 miles, grey, AC, FSH, alarm, long MoT, auto, one owner, cruise control, PAS, alloys, Navigation system, Leather interior, £4,600. 01543 458100

HYUNDAI H10 1.2 CLASSIC 59 plate, 25,000 miles, blue, 9 months MoT, recent full service, one owner, good condition. Ideal first car. £3,850. 01543 453013.

MERCEDES E430 1999, silver, 74,000 genuine miles, 12 months MoT, FSH, lovely condition, £1,350. 07970 992872.

SUZUKI JIMNY SZ4, 59 reg, black, 12000 miles, service history, 10 months MoT, looks new, £6,995. 01543 675063. 07939 161436.

cars under £1500

ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED that the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

DAIHATSU TERIOS, 2002, 62,500 miles, silver, alarm, MoT, metallic paint, stereo, 4x4, excellent condition. £1,375 ono. 07971 199414.

FORD ESCORT ESTABL 1.6, W reg, MoT, alloys, towbar, roof rack, radio cassette, clean. £295. 01922 646406 or 07466 082028.

FORD GALAXY ZETEC, 7 seater people carrier, 2000 model, low miles, excellent condition, good MoT, used daily, all extras, cheapest ever £795. 07825 361127.

HYUNDAI GETZ 1.0, 2004, 32k miles, low miles, excellent condition, good MoT, used daily, all extras, cheapest ever £795. 07825 361127.

HYUNDAI GETZ, 2004, 98,930 miles, black, MoT, 1.5 diesel. £1,100 ono. 07805 050539.

MERCEDES 190E

1992, silver, electric windows, long MoT, auto, metallic paint, central locking, pas, diesel, sunroof, stereo. £1,250. 07717 208663.

TOYOTA AVENSIS 55 Reg, MoT 2015, 140,000 miles, £950. 07448 950663.

TOYOTA YARIS Verso, 01, 46,500 miles, met dark red, 11 months MoT, very good condition, £1,125. 01922 479590 / 07957 742129.

VAUXHALL CORSA W reg, 1.2, metallic blue, 3dr, MoT till May, 61,000 miles, clean and tidy, £425 ono. 07514 081104.

commercial vehicles

ASTRA VAN X reg, 2001 diesel, 135,000 miles, good condition, £800. 01922 475392.

BARGAIN VANS Small & large £395 - £595 inc vat. 12 months MoT. 01902 451877 / 07944 640999.

VAUXHALL COMBO VAN, MoT August, white, 2004, £1,000. Telephone 07581 112556.

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9
Local Information

public & legal notices

Walsall Council, Planning and Building Control

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Development Management Procedure Order 2010 (as amended)

The below applications have been made to the Walsall Council. Applications can be viewed at First Stop Shop, Civic Centre, Walsall or online www.walsall.gov.uk/planning. Representations can be made online, email: planningservices@walsall.gov.uk or in writing to Head of Planning and Building Control, Civic Centre, Darvall Street, Walsall, WS1 1DG. Representations should be made within 21 days of the date of this notice.

Please note: Your letter and personal details will form part of the planning file which is a public document and will be available for inspection at the Council Offices. The information may be released as part of a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

14/1734/FL Joseph Leckie Academy FOR: Construction of three storey new building teaching block on existing school site at Joseph Leckie Academy together with associated landscape works. AT: JOSEPH LECKIE COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE, WALSTEAD ROAD WEST, WALSALL, WS5 4PG

14/1628/FL Mr John Quigley FOR: Erection of front garden boundary walls and replacement garage at 3 Belvidere Road together with alterations to windows and roof covering, and also alteration to roof covering at 4 Belvidere Road. AT: 3 AND 4 BELVIDERE ROAD, WALSALL, WS1 3AU

14/1815/FL Mr Gray: FOR: Amendment to planning approval no. 13/0649/FL for alterations to the conservatory to include a tiled roof and brick side wall. AT: 2 VICTORIA MEWS, WALSALL, WS4 2DZ

14/1838/FL MV Leisure UK Ltd FOR: Change of use from A2 betting office to A4 drinking establishment and alterations to shopfront and sign board AT UNIT 3 GROUND FLOOR BRIDGE HOUSE, 47 BRIDGE STREET, WALSALL, WS1 1JQ

14/1839/AD MV Leisure UK Ltd FOR: Replacement fascia. AT: UNIT 3 GROUND FLOOR BRIDGE HOUSE, 47 BRIDGE STREET, WALSALL, WS1 1JQ

LEGAL / PUBLIC NOTICES

For convenience you may fax any advertising requirements to

Marie Hogg on 01902 713146
or email

marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk

(remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Mr Jonathan Mann trading as Musicmann of 33 Woolbridge Close, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 7DH is applying for a licence to use Unit 2 Component House, Leamore Lane, Bloxwich, Walsall WS2 7DH as an operating centre for 3 goods vehicles and 2 trailers.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at West Midlands Traffic Area Office, Hill Crest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representatives must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to making representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

JOHN BRIAN TURNER (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 35 New Road Brownhills Walsall WS8 6AT, who died on 15/02/2010, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned on or before 27/02/2015, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice. **THE CO-OPERATIVE LEGAL SERVICES LIMITED**
Aztec 650 Aztec West
Almondsbury Bristol BS32 4SD
(Ref: LN3503037P/Turner)

BUY LOCAL SELL LOCAL
01902 317878



ClassifiedAds

In Personals
general

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

INDIAN GENTLEMAN
British born, 30 plus, W/LTM female for days out/in, pubs, clubs and to enjoy holidays.
Box Number P10626, Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

GENERAL HANDYMAN REQUIRED
Must be kind and caring. Needed for around once a week for 2-3 hours per week. For general work, gardening, help around the house, D.I.Y. **Box Number P19621**, Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

ADVERTISEMENTS CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE

- Midland News Association Limited** All publications in this group are published by the Midland News Association Limited, registered office Queen Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1ES ("the Company") and this is the address to which any notices should be sent.
- Acceptance** The Company will only accept advertising on these standard terms and no other contract terms or conditions will apply other than those which are implied by statute and cannot lawfully be excluded. In particular the Company will not accept advertising on the basis of advertiser's terms and conditions.
- Content of Advertisements** All advertisements must be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Advertisements must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice and all other codes under the general supervision of the Advertising Standards Authority. Advertisements must comply with the requirements of all current legislation including but not limited to the following: (a) the Consumer Credit Act 1974, (b) the Consumer Credit (Advertisements) Regulations 1980, (c) the Consumer Credit (Disclosure) Regulations 1977. Advertisements offering credit or hire facilities must comply with the Consumer Credit (Advertisements) Regulations 1980. All descriptions of goods must be accurate and in no way infringe the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968.
- Liability** The Company's liability for any loss or damage caused by any error or omission in the advertisement or any other breach of contract shall not in any circumstances exceed a full refund of any price paid by the advertiser to the Company for the publication of the advertisement or the cost of a further or corrective advertisement of the same type as that which originally appeared. Where a series of advertisements is booked the Company's liability shall not in any circumstances exceed the value of the first advertisement in the series. In the event of any error, misprint or omission in the publication of the advertisement the Company will either re-publish the advertisement or the relevant parts of the advertisement or make a reasonable refund or of adjustment to the cost of the advertisement. If the error does not materially detract from the advertisement then no re-publication, refund or adjustment of price shall be made. It is the advertiser's responsibility to check the content of advertisements and the Company will not accept any liability for loss or damage, or obligation to re-publish or make a refund or adjustment, arising from re-publication of an advertisement containing an error, misprint or omission which has not been identified by the advertiser after first publication.
- Box numbers** The Company accepts no liability for loss or damage caused by delay in forwarding or omission to forward to the advertiser replies to Box Numbers. Box Numbers must not be used for sending goods, distributing circulars or communications from agents. The Company reserves the right to open and inspect all replies to Box Number and to destroy goods, circulars or communications from agents which are discovered during an inspection.
- Inspection** The Company shall be entitled at any time to inspect any goods or services advertised and may decline to carry further advertising if such inspection is not permitted or if in the Company's opinion the provision of further advertising facilities is not appropriate in view of the nature or quality of the goods or services.
- Indemnity** The advertiser, including any advertising agency involved in placing any advertisement, warrants that he has permission to use for publication in the advertisement and printed materials any material which is included in the advertisement. The advertiser and any advertising agency involved in placing any advertisement agree to indemnify the Company in respect of all charges, costs, claims or damages arising out of the publication of the advertisement, whether the same result from actual or threatened legal action or from some other cause.
- Cancellation** On a request for cancellation or amendment of a classified advertisement being accepted, you will be given a cancellation or amendment number which must be quoted in all subsequent correspondence. Payment of the originally agreed price will be required in full for any advertisement in relation to which the advertiser is unable to supply a valid cancellation or amendment number. Cancellation or amendment will not be accepted if the Company is notified of the cancellation by no later than the following deadlines:
Lineage, Semi Display - By no later than 6.30pm on the working day prior to publication. Advertisements to appear on Monday must be cancelled by 10 am on the preceding Saturday.
Classified Display - By no later than 24 hours before the date of publication.
Colour/Features - By no later than 10 clear days before the date of publication.
To cancel Lineage, Semi Display and Classified Display advertisements please telephone 01902 317878. To cancel Colour/Features advertisements please speak to the Representative through whom the advertisement was booked.
- Rates** Advertising rates are as laid out in the Company's current rate card which is available on request from the Company's offices. The rates may be varied from time to time in the Company's absolute discretion and without prior notification of the intended variation. The revised rate will be charged for any advertising ordered after the date of variation.
- Gross advertising rates** except classified lineage and semi-display are subject to a 0.1% Advertising Standards Board of Finance levy payable by advertisers to help finance the self-regulatory system administered by the Advertising Standards Authority.
- Payment** The Company reserves the right to require pre-payment as a condition of any advertisement being published. Where pre-payment is not required unless different credit terms have been agreed with the advertiser in writing payment must be made within 14 days of the date of issue of the Company's invoice. An additional £2.00 booking charge will be payable if the invoice is not paid in full within this 14 day period.
- Additional credit facilities** which are offered are at the Company's absolute discretion. The advertiser's liability shall be for the full amount of all advertising ordered and shall not be limited to the amount of any credit limit which the Company may impose.
- Payment** may be made by [method] cash, cheque or credit/debit card. The advertiser's obligation to pay for other items on an account shall not be affected by the existence of any query over an individual item within that account.
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Saddlers showed spirit – Smith

WALSALL boss Dean Smith hailed his side's "outstanding" spirit after they moved within one win of Wembley with a thrilling penalty shoot-out triumph at Tranmere.

The Saddlers won in sudden death after the Johnstone's Paint Trophy area semi-final finished 2-2 and the shoot-out was locked at 4-4 after five penalties each.

Paul Downing scored the winning penalty and Smith's men, who were 2-0 down at half-time last night, will now play Preston or Notts County over two legs with the club's first Wembley appearance at stake.

"I was quite calm all game," said Smith.

"We started the game really well and at half-time I was shell-shocked that we were 2-0 down. I told the lads 'you can accept it or you can do something about it.'

"In the second half we were outstanding. It became an end-to-end game, we cleared one off the line and Tom Bradshaw had a chance, and it was great to win the shoot-out.

"It was a great strike from Michael Cain to equalise. I am proud of the players for their application in the second half because it would have been so easy to go under at 2-0.

Matt makes a mark at Banks's

FORMER Southampton and England ace, Matt Le Tissier, entertained a sell-out Banks's Stadium crowd.

The current Sky Sports pundit spoke at length about his time as a top-flight footballer, representing his country and his current television role at a sporting dinner at Walsall.

Famous for his almost impeccable record from the penalty spot, the technically gifted midfielder spent his whole career with Southampton, winning the PFA Young Player of the Year in 1990 and earning eight caps for his country.

"It was an honour to have Matt here," said Saddlers' chief executive, Stefan Gamble.

We had Jimmy Greaves with us recently so it's great to have welcomed another former England star to the Banks's Stadium last week as part of our extensive Christmas events programme, added Mr Gamble.

Dicko could be back in it

NOUHA DICKO could be back on Wolves' duty this weekend.

The live wire forward has not played since the October 25 victory at Leeds because of a nagging hamstring injury.

But head coach Kenny Jackett confirmed Dicko and defender Ethan Ebanks-Landell could both be set for comebacks when Brighton visit Molineux on Saturday.

Both will train this week before Jackett decides whether they are fit enough to feature.

Either way, the duo have a good chance to be involved in the Christmas games.

Squad get grip on close-run game

Balsall & Berkswell 10 Walsall 20
THE hosts took an early lead as a result of their opponents conceding penalties.

They used their powerful scrum to good effect which resulted in full back Knott going over.

The visitors broke through thanks to Chris Mould's 100th try for the club.

Weston's conversion gave Walsall the lead.

The host's captain Waite then scored.

Weston then added more points with a 30 metre kick.

Rod Dickson that gave Walsall the lead just before half time.

Weston added the conversion and put over another penalty 10 minutes into the second half.

The United had their game cancelled.

The 3rd XV lost 37-20 at Shrewsbury.

Rugby

Jordan Lay scored two tries and kicked a conversion. Mario Tamilio also scored a try and Kevin Pitt kicked a penalty.

Sihillians Colts 12 Walsall Colts 13
The Walsall Colts build on the victory over DK with another fully deserved win over Old Sills. The astute tactical kicking and all round play of fly half Connor Pitt stood out.

However, the work rate and battling qualities of the Walsall pack with James Ellis and Bobby Harding laid the foundation for an impressive win.

There were two excellent tries.

The first by Ethan Walker, who was as usual a constant threat and then young winger Tobi Oloke who took his score well

after being put away by Ellis.

Skipper and man of the match, Jordan Lay kicked the penalty that rounded off a tremendous performance from a team that improves with every game.

Walsall Junior Rugby
Walsall Under-15s 14 Moseley Under-15s 17

Walsall faced a strong Moseley side for the first time in a couple of years and the game it produced was of the highest quality.

The home team started strongly with some fine periods of play, recycling the ball well and making inroads into the Moseley half.

This pressure resulted in a penalty from which Jamie Harding crashed over from close range with Will Hennessey adding the conversion.

Moseley then got some possession and

were able to show the strength of their back line and broke through on a number of occasions only to be brought down by Walsall's superb tackling.

Eventually they managed to dive over for an unconverted try and another right on the half time whistle.

The second half was as tight as the first with Moseley getting an early converted try and then both sides making good runs only to be brought down short of the line.

The hosts set up a tense finish as they drove close to Moseley's line and were awarded a scrum.

From the scrum Jamie Harding picked up, drove towards the line and offloaded to Finn Moseley to dive over for a try wide out which was converted by Will Hennessey.

Walsall had a chance to score in the last minute but were held up.

Walsall teach the students a lesson

Walsall Wood 3 Loughborough University 0
WOOD recorded their second double of the season, comfortably seeing off the students who were saved from a double figure defeat by keeper Jake Weekes.

Harry Harris delivered a free kick to the left of the box. Corey Currithers headed the ball into the danger zone to find Joey Butlin to cleverly lay the ball back to Max Black to take the goal.

Football

A minute later a lovely, intricate move wide left ended with Ben Evans and Andre Gonzales playing the ball into the path of Black to open the scoring with a crisp, low drive.

The students got through the Wood midfield after 36 minutes, a right wing free kick to beyond the far post was headed back across goal by Josh Hill, Tom Reads first time shot blocked.

Six minutes later Hill got clear wide left, his ball inside hit first time by Ben Ward-Cochrane to bring a great full length save from keeper Mario Kisiel.

On 43 minutes Butlin released Black through the middle, his low drive pushed away by Weekes, Taylor was first to react beyond the far post to fire in a low drive that was kept out by the keeper, the ball went straight to Taylor who couldn't believe how Weekes pushed the ball round the post.

From the corner the ball was played out to Black whose first time drive bounced to safety off the bar.

Three minutes into the second half another intricate left wing six man move ended with Ben Evans hitting a rising drive inches too high.

On 52 minutes a forceful left wing run and cross

by Currithers saw the ball sliced behind by Gabriel Mansbridge.

From the first corner the ball was put behind for another, from which Jamie Sauntson headed just too high.

A minute later Shawn Boothe's defensive header found Taylor on halfway, he quickly found Gonzales wide left who played in Black to race into the box, his shot was inches wide of the left hand post.

55 minutes gone, Ben Evans played a ball across the face of the box, Butlin hitting a first time low drive inches wide.

Wood finally got the second goal they deserved when on 64 minutes Black intercepted a pass on halfway, ran on before releasing Currithers into the box to calmly stroke the ball beyond the stranded keeper as he came to meet him.

Four minutes later Currithers was released wide left by Gonzales, he cut inside and was half stopped, the ball fell to Harris to hit a first time effort just too high.

On 71 minutes a botched clearance saw the ball charged down by Taylor, ricocheting into the empty net to give the scoreline a more realistic look.

Bloxwich get crucial league victory with bonus



The Bloxwich squad get stuck into the maul during their route of Uttoxeter

Bloxwich RFC 1st XV 36
Uttoxeter RFC 0

BLOXWICH RFC won a crucial league match and earned a bonus point victory with a six try performance.

Bloxwich's dominant pack ensured the majority of possession through some secure play in the set piece.

This was rewarded with a penalty try after Uttoxeter, who were camped under their own posts, conceded penalties at the scrum.

Scrum half Martin Maclean

stepped up to slot the conversion to make it 7-0.

Bloxwich started strongly in the second half with good running and handling to set up some attacking phases in the opposition's 22.

The second try for Bloxwich was created by some good link up play from the back row and half backs.

Dean Bottomer who saw his chance and dummied two defenders to cross the line for the try.

M.Mclean converted to make the score. . Strong running and good

handling from Bloxwich RFC created a further four tries.

Two for man of the match Liam Chew and one each for big Jack Hunt and Chris Thomas. The addition of another conversion from M.Mclean made the final score.

Coaches Ian Forrester and Rob Hunt were delighted with the reaction to the half time team talk, and on a cold December afternoon were pleased with the disciplined performance and the attractive running rugby on show.

Trophy places are up for grabs

BOSS Dean Smith has warned his Walsall players that places are at stake for their Johnstone's Paint Trophy last-four showdown during their vital Christmas fixtures.

The Saddlers manager says the chance to play in a two-legged area final for a spot in a Wembley final can spur his players on to perform in League One.

Smith has ordered his players to refocus on their league campaign after the thrilling penalty shoot-out win at Tranmere left them just one win from the club's first ever Wembley final.

He said: "It won't be difficult at all. It's good that the players know it gives us a big Christmas period, knowing they've got to stay in the team if they want to play in these sort of games.

"It will be put to bed now. We will do a debrief on the Trophy.

Saddlers chairman Jeff Bonser visited the dressing room at Prenton Park to congratulate the players on their victory over Rovers.

Smith said: "He's as chuffed as anyone.

"There are still a couple of games to go before we can get excited but he is really pleased. It gives us a live game as well."

Fight club signs off with title

WALSALL Wood Boxing Club have signed off for 2014 by claiming their seventh national title in seven straight years and literally right at the death, writes Craig Birch.

The fight factory on Lichfield Road in Brownhills churned out another champion, from the unlikely source of quiet teenager Ibrahim Khan, at the weekend.

The 16-year-old, a pupil at the Joseph Leekie Academy in Walsall, turned a razor-thin points decision his way in the last 30 seconds of their England Development junior championships final.

With that he joined Matthew Parsons, hat-trick hero Daniel Breeze, Joseph Stevenson and Lauren Johnson in the club's Hall of Fame.

Khan was back in the gym to a chorus of claps and cheers after his victory on Saturday, with trainer Shaun Healy admitting even he didn't expect it to happen.

Blues hand out Royal rout

Birmingham 6 Reading 1
PAUL CADDIS opened the scoring before Gray's clinical first-half hat-trick, while goals from Andrew Shinnie and David Cotterill completed the rout.

Reading pulled one back in the 19th minute through Glenn Murray, only for the excellent Gray to restore the two-goal lead with another well-taken solo effort.

Reading at that point were actually arguably the better team, yet Gray completed his hat-trick before half-time, again on the break.

"It was a ruthless and clinical performance," Blues boss Gary Rowett said.

Irvine makes a little piece of derby history

Albion 1 Villa 0
WHATEVER happens next in Alan Irvine's troubled Hawthorns reign, the Scot will forever have a little bit of Albion history on his CV as the first man in more than three years to deliver victory for the club against their closest rivals.

For Paul Lambert, too, the full implications of Saturday's events were unclear as he left the scene to reflect on a frustrating defeat.

The Villa boss will hope and believe that Craig Gardner's match-winning goal was merely a bump in the road that leads to the top half of the Premier League table and a bright future with job security.

Yet he will know the significance of losing to their neighbours could trigger a series of results that puts him and his position as

boss back in the spotlight.

In truth, both sets of fans departed at the weekend unsure of exactly what Albion's 1-0 victory meant or their respective clubs' seasons and futures.

The only thing that was clear was that Albion fans had much more fun on Saturday afternoon than their claret and blue counterparts.

And for Irvine, that meant a rare Sunday of relative relaxation in a campaign when most weekends have been spent copping abuse and wondering just how long Jeremy Peace would wait before reacting.

The Albion boss was rewarded on Saturday for the kind of boldness that supporters have been demanding for weeks. But even after including summer signings Brown Ideye and Silvestre Varela in his starting

line-up to general acclaim from the Baggies fanbase, he was forced to endure an afternoon of tension and stress before Gardner's well-struck maiden Albion goal ensured him a rare moment of pleasure.

Because while Kieran Richardson's ill-judged 23rd-minute tackle on Baggies midfielder Stephane Sessegnon and the red card that followed turned out to be a blessing for Irvine, it could so easily have been a curse.

If the pressure on the Baggies boss was not intense enough before his first derby in charge, the sending-off of the former Hawthorns loanee made the Villa game one the hosts simply had to win.

And for 50 minutes of action, it appeared his side might find Villa's 10 men impossible to break down and land their chairman with a big decision to make.

Gardner's winner was just reward for a second half performance in which the Baggies turned the screw on Villa's depleted side systematically and finally breached their defences. But it did little to dispel the concerns about the lack of creativity and flair in Irvine's ranks.

Varela enjoyed an encouraging full debut wide on the left and his trickery and confidence gave the home fans hope of something different . Yet Ideye still looks like a man struggling to adapt to Premier League life and, with Victor Anichebe effectively a part-time player because of injury and Saido Berahino experiencing a horrible loss of form, goals still appear to be a big problem for Irvine's side.

At least Gareth McAuley's return has given the Baggies back-to-back clean sheets.

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Students stung
University side is
taught a lesson
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Getting a grip
Squad come out on
top in close game
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Winger begins to show his form

SADDLERS boss Dean Smith believes Walsall are beginning to see the best of Jordan Cook after the winger's two-goal blast in Saturday's 3-1 win over Barnsley.

Cook's brace included a 'goal of the season' contender – a stunning half-volley from the edge of the box.

And Smith believes the former Sunderland man is ready to fire on all cylinders after missing the first two months of the season with a broken ankle.

Smith said: "I've got a lot of time for Jordan – I think he's a super player. He was very impressive on Saturday. His first goal was a fantastic strike."

"During pre-season, players were asking me how we had managed to get him on a two-year contract."

"Then unfortunately he broke his ankle and it takes time to come back from that. But he's starting to look brighter and brighter and that's only good news for us."

Smith was also pleased with the link-up down Walsall's left between Cook and teenage full-back Rico Henry, who made his league debut against the Tykes.

The manager added: "Jordan worked really hard and I think he likes the responsibility of looking after Rico Henry behind him, not that Rico needs any helping."

Bloxwich in shut down

Yardley 0
Bloxwich Men's 1st XI 11
BLOXWICH played an unbalanced match against a Yardley team who are bottom of the league table.

The Walsall sideward straight for Yardley's jugular.

Within three minutes Bloxwich were 3-0 up with Adam Baldwin starting his goalfeet where he grabbed a hat trick within 10 minutes.

With the scores at 7-0 at half-time, a deflated Yardley carried on their fight but Bloxwich scored four more in the second half handing Yardley their biggest defeat of the season.

Adam Baldwin's seven goals took him to within one of the league's top scorer, one for captain Edward Marrocco, Harry Robinson and Jake Perkins getting one each and Phil Ashcroft creeping up the league's top scorers list with another.

Jordan hoping to cook up more scores

WALSALL'S Jordan Cook has promised more goals will follow his brace against Barnsley.

Summer arrival Cook had struck just once in 13 appearances for the Saddlers on his return from a broken ankle that kept him out of the early weeks of the campaign.

But he fired home a delicious double, including a corker of a half-volley from 20 yards, in the 3-1 triumph over Barnsley.

And he said: "It was about time I chipped in with a couple of goals and I think Saturday was just my day."

"The first strike was just one of those in-

Football

stinctive ones where you've just got to hit it. "My whole game is based around assists and goals so to be involved in all three goals was very important for me."

"I know I should be scoring more goals and I know I should be putting away some of the chances I've had."

"On Saturday, it was just one of those days where it all finally clicked so hopefully I can push on and start adding more."

Tom Bradshaw bagged Walsall's other

goal to move into double figures for the season but Cook dismissed suggestions the Saddlers have been too reliant on their top scorer.

He added: "I think there's a lot of concern Tom was getting all the goals but for him to get the goals the team has to work well and supply him."

"An assist is just as good as a goal really because without the assist there's no goal."

"And with the lads we've got on the bench – Mathieu Manset and Ashley Grimes, who are terrific finishers – I think there are going to be plenty more goals to come."

Victory pushed Walsall to within four points of the League One play-offs and with a Johnstone's Paint Trophy area final to look forward to next month, Cook expects exciting times ahead.

He added: "We are climbing up the table steadily and we want to be up there in and around the play-offs by Christmas, which we are not far off now. Another couple of wins and we'll be flying."

"It's got great promise for a tremendous season but we are not getting too far ahead of ourselves – there's a lot of football to be played."

Rushall reach a high five

Stourbridge 3 Rushall 5
RUSHALL put on a five-star show which saw Stourbridge put out of the Birmingham Senior Cup.

Pics pulled off a thrilling 5-3 win in extra time in the first round tie at the War Memorial Ground. Glassboys grabbed a fourth minute lead through Luke Benbow.

Rushall replied after 33 minutes when Ramone Stephens slotted home.

Stephens then grabbed his second when he fired Rushall in front.

Stourbridge kept the tie alive with a dramatic 93rd minute leveller when Jordan Fitzpatrick forced one home.

Just two minutes into extra time, Stephens came back to haunt Stourbridge by completing his hat-trick when he belted home a low cross from Heath and put the Pics in the driving seat.

But Stourbridge again hit back to level things up when Josh Morgan-Parker pounced on a rebound.

Rushall finished the stronger side, wrapping up the tie with two goals both of which came from Aaron Williams.

Spireites must replay Dons

THE FA has ruled Chesterfield must replay their FA Cup second-round tie with MK Dons.

The Spireites beat the Dons 1-0, but after the game admitted a charge of fielding an ineligible player, George Margreitter.

Margreitter played despite not completing the necessary paperwork.

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COOK HAS THE PERFECT RECIPE

Walsall 3 Barnsley 1

WALSALL boss Dean Smith kept faith with his players.

He drafted in only Leicester man Michael Cain to compensate for the ongoing injury problems of Sam Mantom. And unlike four years ago when the Saddlers remained mired in the bottom four, Walsall have gradually eased away from danger.

They are closer to the top six than the bottom four now, sitting in the top half of the table for the first time this season.

And while play-off talk is premature still, it will become realistic if they take a respectable points haul against three of the promotion contenders – Sheffield United, Swindon and MK Dons – this next fortnight.

The star men of this display were further evidence of how far Walsall have come too.

Blinder

Jordan Cook scored two – one an absolute blinder – and made the other for goal machine Tom Bradshaw. Both are on two-year deals.

As Smith admitted after the game, some at Walsall were amazed they had been able to land a player like Cook on a two-year contract in the summer.

It was something you suspect would never have happened in Hutchings' reign.

Then – and Chris Hutchings is by far not the only former Walsall manager guilty of this – there was no long-term vision. The Saddlers got by year-to-year.

Smith, in contrast, has tried his best to provide

Football

continuity by tying down players for longer than one season where possible and beneficial.

On a far smaller budget than Hutchings, Smith has pushed the club to change the way it works. For that alone he deserves credit.

It was ironic that Cook was the man to sink Barnsley and Hutchings.

A broken ankle in pre-season has meant a slow start to life back with the Saddlers for the summer capture but he is starting to find his feet now.

He struck as good a goal as Banks's Stadium will see in the 31st minute of this game.

Walsall were behind at that stage, poor marking from a corner having allowed Lewin Nyatanga's head to glance out-of-form Barnsley ahead two minutes earlier.

Cook robbed hesitant full-back Reece Brown and squared for Bradshaw who beat one defender before coolly slotting past Tykes keeper Ross Turnbull.

The Saddlers sealed a deserved three points with another Cook strike.



Tom Bradshaw takes plaudits after scoring one of the three goals against Barnsley at Banks's

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